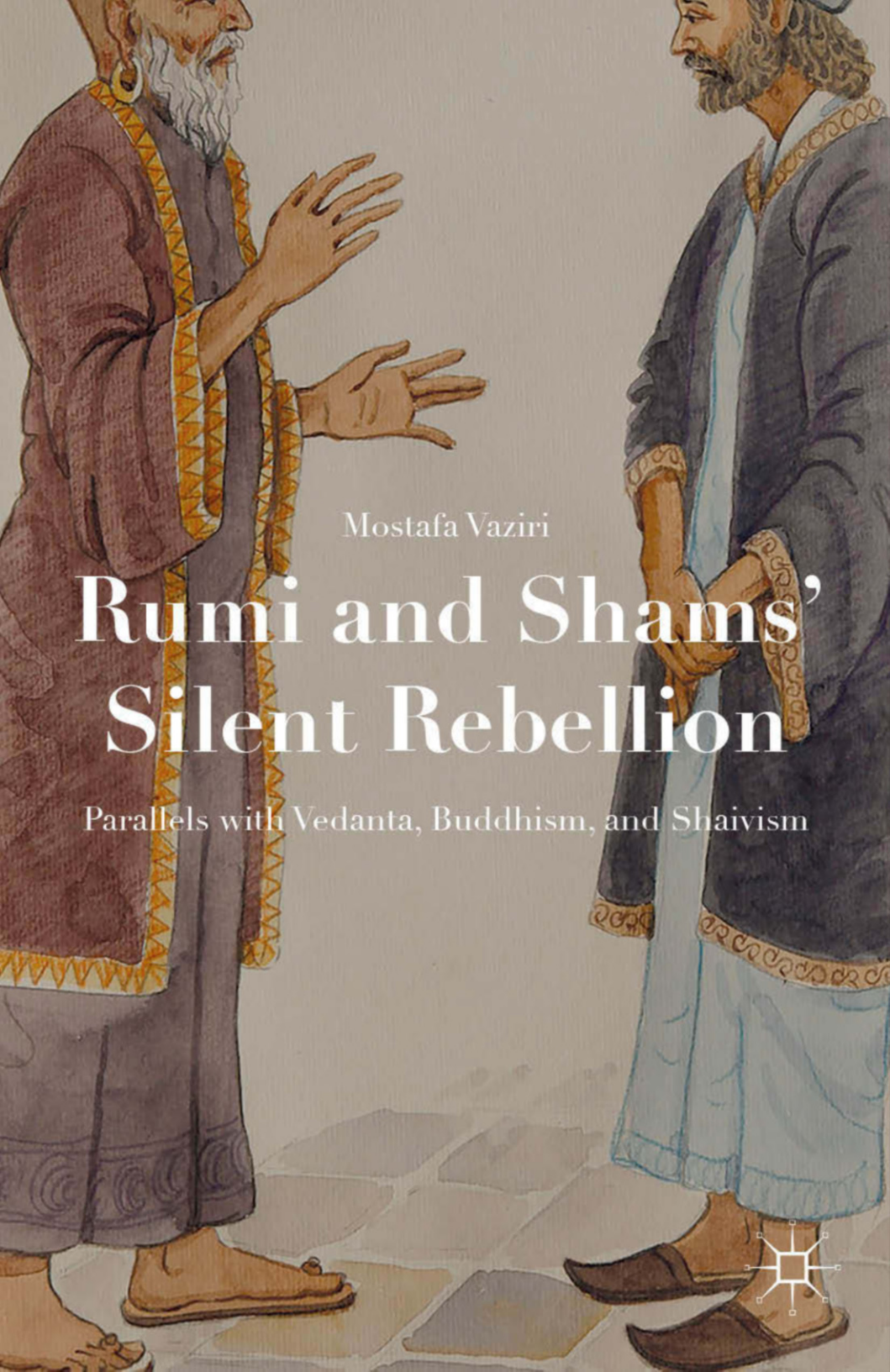

Mostafa Vaziri

Rumi and Shams' Silent Rebellion

Parallels with Vedanta, Buddhism, and Shaivism

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This book is enthusiastically dedicated to the iconoclastic pioneers of mind and heart.

Rumi's Iconoclastic Universalism

At his core, Rumi was a Universalist thinker and a cosmopolitan. His philosophy embraced equanimity in human affairs and inspired coexistence despite diverse religions and cultures throughout world history. He took an inclusive approach to bring Zoroastrians, Hindus, Jews, Christians, pagans, and idol-worshippers with the Muslims; the Arabs with the Persians; the Turks with the Indians; and the Romans with the Ethiopians, all humanity under the same banner of equality. Everyone, even the sectarian, religious, and non-universalist thinkers, were included in his Universalism. But Rumi refused to entertain the limited definition of Universalism, especially when a community claimed the monopoly of the truth while ostracizing those who did not belong to their particular assembly or believe in their particular god. To Rumi, everyone carries a burning flame of Love in his or her heart, and it is an urgent necessity that this fact becomes deeply recognized. He deftly rebelled against bigoted and condescending intolerance and paved the way for enlightenment, as well as prompting a spiritual and intellectual evolution.

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Author's Note

The core of this book offers not just an analysis of Rumi's poetry and Shams' discourses, but also aims to create a fresher narrative of Rumi with a new historiographical and philosophical approach.

In this approach, we disentangle Rumi from his traditionally accepted role as founder of the Mevlevi order, because the anachronistic nature of this claim makes it a highly suspect conclusion. Since the order was created decades after Rumi's death, and the Islamic-Sufi-Ottoman background of the order does not reflect much of the textual study of the original Shams and Rumi narrative, alternative conclusions can thus be drawn from the poetry and discourses of the two men, and the exploration of those alternatives is the goal of this book.

After historically disentangling Rumi on one hand, we should include him more fully in the field of philosophy on the other, rather than viewing him from the limited perspective of being "just" a poet and mystic. It is true that he was a poet and a mystic, but of a different genre—a mystic who poetically formulated and articulated his affirmative experiences, seeking the truth of existence, as well as expressing his skepticism about the theory of creation, anticlericalism, and his profound ideas about human society.

Thus one could say that the proposition of this book is to remove the rigidity and the politics of Islamic Sufism that has blocked other, broader perspectives on Rumi and his work. Based on the primary sources that survive, we will reimagine the time when Rumi and Shams developed a highly evolved consciousness that was not lost, but has only been clouded over the centuries because of historical and religious constraints.

This book results from years of fascination with Rumi's message. As children growing up in Iran, my friends and I memorized Rumi's words in school. Years later, a continuing personal interest in Rumi's philosophical and spiritual approach led me first to translate and publish some of Rumi's poems in 1998, and to follow that work with another coffee-table book offering an introduction to Shams and

Rumi in 2008. I was influenced by the usual depiction of Rumi found in secondary sources: Rumi as Sufi poet, and Islamic mystic, transformed by his master Shams.

But that picture of Rumi turned out to be incomplete. The initial jolt came after I made several trips to India over the years and delved into a study of Buddhism. This led me as a social scientist to pursue research on the interconnection of the Iranian world with Buddhism, resulting in the book *Buddhism in Iran: An Anthropological Approach to Traces and Influences* (2012).

During these Indian trips I also studied *advaita* Vedanta and Kashmir Shaivism, both non-dualist schools. Meanwhile, in rereading almost all of Rumi's poems and of course Shams' discourses (*Maqālāt*), I began to suspect that my approach and understanding of Rumi had been both limited and somewhat sentimentalized and flawed. I was now seeing Rumi through different philosophical and anthropological lenses. Not only did I become aware of the anachronistic post-construction of Rumi's world by the Mevlevi hagiographers, followed by later authors, but also I discovered numerous surprising parallels between Rumi's writings and other spiritual schools of thought.

Thus I began the intellectual challenge of elucidating Rumi's broader, timeless, often non-religious universal message and connecting it with the sphere of the sages of Asia who had been pouring out a similar message in different eras and different cultures. It was also necessary not only to put Rumi's poetry into the context of the historical reality of his own time but also to open the way for a new alternative view of Rumi as an intercultural philosopher. It seemed a monumental task to go back and reread, select and translate the thousands of poems in Rumi's *Divan* and *Masnavi* as well as his utterances in *Fīhi mā fīh*. In addition, deciphering Shams' ideas in the multiple versions of his *Maqālāt* was a massive undertaking, as I sought the link between Shams' radical message and that of Rumi. Reading the poems of Rumi's son, Sultan Valad, also became important in constructing the circumstances of the years after Shams' interactions with Rumi.

Rereading all these writings through a wider transcultural lens led to fascinating breakthroughs of interpretation and the development of a new paradigm for understanding Rumi's message. As time passed, my central intention became to present Rumi's message based solely on the original content of his own poetry, not based on secondary sources. This book is intended for students, researchers, and admirers of Rumi, especially those who, like myself, desire an alternative to the traditional Sufi or Mevlevi depiction of Rumi and his message.

It also aims to present Rumi in relation to other philosophies, sages, and schools of thought cross-culturally, instead of studying each in an isolated manner, and particularly to explore the linkage of ideas and philosophies between the Indian and Iranian worlds. I hope others will pick up where I have left off and that this realm will be much more fully investigated, because it is my feeling that we are just beginning to uncover the interlinked wisdom in our world.

Mostafa Vaziri
Innsbruck, Dharamsala and White Salmon
November 2014

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Acknowledgments

Rumi is a cultural and literary gem whose ancestral roots, choice of language, cultural psychology, and intellectual style can be traced back to Balkh, Afghanistan. This book has come to epitomize my sincere love and admiration for both the Afghan people and Afghanistan as a cultural bedrock of many past achievements. Having lived and served there as a volunteer medical doctor for a number of years, my partner Allison and I have great respect and passion for that currently war-torn country. Allison, meanwhile, made an incredible contribution to this book by reading all the chapters to assure the flow of the text and restoring my confidence whenever I had doubts about continuing this project.

In understanding and putting into perspective the intellectual history of the East, I am thankful to my most patient and highly esteemed mentor, Professor Michael G. Morony of UCLA, who over the last two decades taught me an unbiased and critical approach. I am grateful to Professor Morony for reading the entire manuscript and providing sound suggestions that improved the narrative. I am indebted also to Professor Mehdi Aminrazavi, an expert on Islamic intellectual history, who generously made reading this work a priority, leading to a wonderful exchange of ideas that were extremely helpful in improving this book. Dr. Denis Hermann has been valuable in reading the manuscript and leading me to important sources and ideas. Professor Asef Bayat, a brilliant sociologist and a close friend, deserves many thanks for drawing my attention to important points about my method and definition of ideas. Professor Ahmad Karimi-Hakak also deserves thanks for providing helpful feedback on the manuscript. I am delighted to have received the benefit of a short but pointed critique from Professor Patricia Crone. It is my pleasant duty to thank Professor Reinhard Margreiter, who in the course of the last several years in Innsbruck nurtured me with his philosophical insights.

Chapters 6A and 6B would not have been viable had they not been read, improved upon, and endorsed by the prominent Sanskritist and the world's foremost scholar of Kashmir Shaivism and Tantra,

Dr. Mark S. G. Dyczkowski. I have also had the pleasure of attending his seminars on this subject in Varanasi. For our many discussions on Vedanta, Buddhism, and Shaivism in Varanasi and Dharamsala, and his feedback on these chapters in the present book, I have the pleasure of thanking my dear friend Mr. Giteshwar Raj (known as "the old Indian Raj"), who is fluent in various Indian philosophical schools and languages, including Sanskrit and the language and Buddhist-Tantrism of Tibet. On that note, I would also like to thank Dr. Bettina Bäumer, who in her seminars in India was the first to teach me about Kashmir Shaivism.

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Last but not least, I would like to thank the Philosophy Department at the Universität Innsbruck for hosting me all these years and providing me with intellectual support.

Still, despite the enormous support from all these wonderful people and sources, I am solely responsible for the content of this book.

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A Note about the Sources

Rumi's *Divan* and *Masnavi* and Their Numbering

The number following "D" stands for the *ghazal* as numbered by the editor, without the line number(s). The symbol "D: r." followed by a number stands for the *rubā'ī* as numbered in the *Divan*. Of the two numbers following "M," the first is the roman numeral for one of the six books of *Masnavi*; the second is the page number, without the line number(s).

Abbreviations and Titles of the Primary Sources

D: *Divan: Kulliāt Shams-e Tabrizi*, by Rumi
M: *Masnavi* (or *Mathnawi* in Arabic transliteration), by Rumi
Maqālāt: *Maqālāt Shams-e Tabrizi* (Discourses of Shams)
Fīhi mā fīh by Rumi
Ebtidā Nāmeh by Sultan Valad

The abbreviation "D" in the text and footnotes stands for *Divan: Kulliāt Shams-e Tabrizi*. "M" stands for *Masnavi* or *Mathnawi* in Arabic transliteration, both books by Rumi edited by B. Forouzānfar (see bibliography for details).

Chapter 1

The Need for a New Narrative of Rumi

Around thirty years ago, Marilyn Waldman presented arguments to explain why flexible oral teachings of religions, such as Islam, have often taken on a fixed nature and inflexible narrative over time. She explained that theological formation was at the root of this evolution, particularly the techniques of storage and utilization of once-upon-a-time oral information based on social-cognitive differences as well as changes in segments of human society.[1] As oral narratives came to be written down, perspectives on religions and religious topics became more and more rigid because of the concrete nature of the written word. Thus, the tumultuous and dynamic past was reduced to the confinement of written words—an impulse that deflected attention from non-religious past events while at the same time creating a crisis of religious historicism by rejecting non-contextualized interpretations. This seems to be what has happened to the narrative of Rumi's life and teachings.

In light of the great number of books written about Rumi's Sufism and his approach to Islam over the years, these books have paradoxically made it quite difficult to think or look in different directions to acquire an alternative understanding of him. The non-religious interpretation of Rumi's writings has been displaced and clouded by many religiously minded authors simply through fixation on the dogma of religion instead of his poetry. There are two such categories of writings about Rumi: the first is the work of the early Ottoman hagiographers, such as Fereydoun Sepahsalar and Shams al-Din (Ahmed) Aflaki, who themselves were involved with the newly formed Mevlana Sufi sect; the second category is the assessment of the Orientalists,

such as E. G. Browne, R. A. Nicholson, A. J. Arberry, A. Schimmel, and other similar authors, who have framed Rumi as an Islamic mystic. Rumi's uniquely complex experiences have been arbitrarily given an Islamic, designation, a rather definite designation for indefinable truths, as if Rumi's reality was exclusively an Islamic one. The result is a one-sided theme that has been propagated over time, and has found its way to all the secondary and tertiary sources.

Nevertheless, a new narrative of Rumi is demanded by the secular-minded emergent generation that feels the urge to go back to the original poetry and give Rumi's "static texts" (borrowing Waldman's term), themselves stemming from the "dynamic utterances" of Shams, a new life. In other words, the oral teachings and mental experiences of Rumi were locked into written words that now need to be released into a dynamic interpretation. That said, Rumi's writings may not have a single meaning and purpose; readers can interpret and relativize the meaning for themselves, but without implicating Rumi in a fixed structure of interpretation. In other words, a one-dimensional religious or Sufi interpretation of Rumi would be sheer injustice in assessing the monumental works of this multifaceted sage. Furthermore, the oral transmissions from Shams to Rumi were produced spontaneously, without having followed a written text, and thus one should also avoid freezing these ephemeral teachings into fixed theories.[2]

The framework applied in this book is meant to provide an additional or alternative narrative for studying Rumi; the intention is not to reject the existing and dominant narrative but to broaden it. A secular and humanist study of Rumi, particularly exploring the philosophical aspects of his message, is the primary theme, even though "secular" and "philosophical" are not part of the classical conceptualization of Rumi. This book also aims to introduce a paradigm shift, but in fact it must be admitted that the original paradigm shift was already introduced by Shams and then transmitted to the young Rumi. This shift has only been blurred and eschewed in the course of history.

The other important aspect of this study is to view Rumi's writings from the perspective of non-dualism, which requires an introduction before we examine other key topics.

1. THE PHILOSOPHY OF NON-DUALISM AND HOW RUMI FITS IN

Non-dualism,[3] through which this book presents a new philosophical understanding of Rumi's ideas, derives from certain Indian

philosophical and spiritual schools of thought. This new narrative at the same time presents a secular and humanistic approach to Rumi's poetical construction. Rumi took an intellectual, intuitive, and philosophical approach to describing how all phenomena, despite their plural façade, share a singular root. Rumi depended neither on hidden religious knowledge nor on his ecstatic, esoteric trance state. He soberly took on a non-rejectionist position by not denying the reality of the world and its affairs, or even moved further away from taking a moralist position, considering that sin would debase the opportunity of final knowledge and enlightenment. The multifaceted world, in Rumi's ultimate perspective, emerged and repeatedly refreshes itself from a single, undivided source of energy. By this non-absolutist position, he also implied that the world is in a continuous state of re-creation and modification. His highest goal was to transmit that the multiplicity and duality of the physical world is linked to its non-plural and non-dual source—all that can be lived and conceptualized in an enlightened consciousness. He did this without resorting to a religious or moral position. Rumi's formulation of the ultimate and unchanging state of existence as genderless, without opposite forces or binary states, was a well-contemplated philosophy that took the shape of poetry in his worldview—a source for his social universalism as well.

> Here there is no room for two; what is the meaning of I and you—consider these two as one, so long as you are in our assembly. (D: 2964)

The concept of non-dualism is applicable to many realms, from social to spiritual and philosophical. Its application in the philosophical and spiritual framework refers to the highest reality, a reality that is not subject to division, nor does it have any opposites. In the real and visible world, all dual pairs are branches of their one and non-dual source. Dualism, in contrast, holds that the world is made out of two opposite forces; that human beings are composed of body and spirit, mind and matter; that there is a Creator separate from the created, the believer (in God) and the unbeliever, and good distinct from evil. Some religious thinkers agree only on God's oneness but maintain the dualisms of believer and non-believer, good and evil, and so on. Dualism underlies many myths, religions, spiritual-philosophical schools, and even Cartesian science and structuralist sociology. Dualism and dualistic thinking has provided an impression that things stem from two or more sources.

From the poststructuralist point of view, which in nature challenges and rectifies the structuralist approach, the term "non-dual" may

imply negating the existence of dual phenomena and pairs of opposites. Poststructuralists argue labeling phenomena and cultural symbols leads to fixed dichotomous structures, and that even a label like "non-dualism" can lead to rigid definitions, which can be misleading. Certainly the complexity and relativism of the world of phenomena and human perceptions of them have led social scientists to reject a single hypothesis about the hierarchical structures. Similarly, the phenomenologist philosophers argue that the reality of life is just as it happens, but only in the perception of the person who experiences it. The liberation from a structured plurality to a pure contemplative oneness that is "non-plural" or "non-dual" is not a negative event. *Non-dualism*, furthermore, has been used by several Indian schools of thought to mean undivided "oneism" (not monism). "Monism" is not used in this book as a substitute for non-dualism because monism has been used in the last three centuries to describe the European formulation of mystico-philosophical concepts rather than Eastern ones, despite the similarity and overlapping of the two traditions. The label of "non-dualism" should be understood here as an alternative for describing the oneness of reality, without the term's negative poststructuralist implication.

Non-dualism, from the Indian philosophical point of view, however, rejects the notion that the world, its source, and the consciousness that perceives them are separate entities: in a nutshell, the objects, the perceiver, and all other mental perception are one and the same entity (as is clear from the Sanskrit term for non-dual, *advaita*). *Advaita* in this case actually means "non-dual," but not necessarily "one" per se, though they in fact share the same intended meaning of a timeless and undivided entity. Understanding the ultimate reality is a transcendence from the world of dualities and pluralities—it is the understanding of unique principle, but through the channel of dualities and pluralities. It is the colorless water that goes in the ground that causes the blossoming of different-colored flowers.[4] Colorless water and multiple-colored flowers are connected at a higher level and originate from a non-multiple source. Raindrops and ocean seem to represent two things, but actually follow a similar non-dual pattern. Questions about God and creation, about the source of human existence, about good and evil, the believer and the unbeliever, heaven and hell, seem to stem from a dualistic cultural perspective. Non-dualism rejects the dualistic or plural façade of things and perceives it as a case of mistaken identity. In other words, this school perceives that all things have a common denominator even if their appearance does not reveal it. This common denominator is unborn, undying, immutable; without

time-reference (timeless); the only true existence; the force of life, not the mortal forms that duel in the realm of linear time and space. This non-dual source is a building block and foundation for transitory and fleeting existence. To grasp and understand this non-dual source is a goal to which Rumi dedicated his work (*Love* is one of the designations that Rumi uses to refer to this immortal and non-dual source of existence). Non-dualism is a philosophical school whose spiritual tenets advocate a non-rejectionist and inclusive attitude, especially towards qualities that seem to be negative, such as disbelief, darkness, evil, pain, and the body, all of which belong, non-dualists believe, to a greater world with a singular source—and qualities that dualistic thinkers either reject or rank as inferior.

The term *non-dualism* thus refers to the consciousness of the ultimate reality elevated beyond transitory appearances of multiplicity, and such multiples and dual pairs ultimately manifest their existence in the pure and non-dual consciousness. The label "non-dualism" is often applied to various philosophical systems, such as *advaita* Vedanta, in which the ultimate reality is called Brahman, or Kashmir Shaivism, in which the ultimate reality is called Śiva. These non-dualist philosophical approaches see the body and the consciousness of the Universe as being one and the same, the foundation of the highest existence with no separation. In this experience the human illusion and his mundane and fleeting relationship with the physical objects is addressed and thus uprooted. This highest existence is hidden from the sight and is unchanging and permanent, but more importantly it is undivided, like the ocean being one with the rivers and raindrops, as Rumi points out (discussed in detail in chapter 5A).

The non-dualistic approach to philosophy and spirituality has often arisen in reaction to dualistic traditions,[5] including most major religions, which tend to be dualistic in nature and belief. For example, among Indian dualistic philosophical systems, the non-theistic Samkhya school of thought (to which the eleventh-century scholar Bīrunī dedicated part of his research on Indian religions) teaches that the world is made out of matter (*prakriti*) and consciousness (*puruṣa*) grouped together. The separation and liberation of consciousness from matter, bound together through desire, is the ultimate goal, a fully dualistic objective. Similarly, Zurvanism and Manichaeism are highly dualistic traditions that propose that the world is composed of two dueling, opposite powers of light and darkness, good and evil. Such dualist thinkers believe the nature of the world was originally designed by God to be light and good, while darkness and evil were interjected and became the flaws brought upon the world by Satan. Dualism and metaphysical debates

about separation are also themes of powerful theistic religions such as Vedic Brahmanism, Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. In each of these religions, the god or gods are considered separate and distinct from human beings and the world. The ideas of good and evil, believer and unbeliever, as well as the separation of the worshipper and the worshipped, are inherent characteristics of these theistic religions. Non-conformist, non-dualist thinkers have attempted to address the limitations and flaws of such dualistic thinking, and this is the profound task undertaken by Rumi in the Islamic world.

The rise of non-dualistic thinking, despite its various origins, is an intellectual as much as a philosophical and spiritual endeavor, challenging the dualistic position of established religions. As we shall demonstrate, Rumi's rejection of dualism is a central theme of his writings. Attributing "non-dualism" to Rumi's philosophical outlook may be a new approach in Islamic studies and in the study of Rumi, but in this book we will bring to light the many ways that Rumi rejected all sorts of dualistic beliefs. His steady refrain, "There is no such thing as two; my being and yours is one, even though it seems two to us" (D: 2242, 2591), demonstrates his intention to introduce the idea of non-dualism to the Islamic world, to Persian literature, and to the philosophically inclined.

In the context of Islamic philosophy and mysticism, the term *non-dualism* may overlap with, but does not have the same relevance as, *wahdat ul-wujud* (unity of existence). *Wahdat ul-wujud* is an Islamic Sufi metaphysics, though a subject of controversy between the hard-core scholastics and liberal Sufis, alluding to God as the only true existence—everything else resembles Him (*tashbīh*), while He resembles Himself (*tanzīh*). In other words, in a paradoxical way it considers God and existence to be one principle. The unity, purity, and absoluteness of God (or rather *tanzīh*) is accepted by Muslims, but other things being similar to God, or even the mystical union of the Sufi practitioner with God, not only is not widely accepted among the jurists of Islam but, from a conservative Islamic perspective, is considered a *bidʿa*, a rather ruinous "innovation," and thus heretical. The discourse of *wahdat ul-wujud*, despite the two philosophical detours of *tashbīh* and *tanzīh*, tries to identify the root of everything as God. The philosophical idea that all existing things are explainable in one single reality has been identified as *pantheism* (popularized after Spinoza, d. 1677), and even *monism* (introduced by Christian von Wolff, d. 1754), in the European tradition—two European terms that have been inappropriately applied by a number of Orientalists to Islamic and Indian mystical-philosophical schools.

Perhaps the past disinclination to uncover Rumi's message of non-dualism has been due to his work being inappropriately associated with purely scholastic Sufism and with Ibn 'Arabi's *wahdat ul-wujud*. Over the years, many have believed that Rumi came under the influence of such conceptual thinking in Sufism. If we accept such a premise, then the consequential meeting and exchanges with Shams, along with Rumi's comprehensive writings and his introduction of music, dance, and visualization, are all reduced to an unoriginal enterprise. But in fact, Shams himself met Ibn 'Arabi in Damascus before arriving in Konya and was not impressed by his mode of thinking. We can see from the *Maqālāt* that Shams found Ibn 'Arabi to be a hypocrite who repeatedly contradicted himself (see chapter 3), and thus it is highly unlikely that Rumi would have embraced Ibn 'Arabi's philosophy, even though he may have maintained contact with Sadr al-Din Qunyawi (d. 1274), the adopted son of Ibn 'Arabi and a proponent of *wahdat ul-wujud*. Rumi's search for the ultimate reality should lead us to understand that rather than blindly following Ibn 'Arabi's brand of Sufism, Rumi was focused on challenging the social and spiritual dualism of his time, including the Islamic division of people between believer and unbeliever, between the worshipper and the worshipped.

Rumi rejected the two-ness of things, but at the same time (unlike *advaita* Vedanta) he never perceived the world as an illusion or to be an illusory reflection of consciousness. To Rumi, the objects of this world and consciousness are two manifestations of the same reality. The religious dualisms of good and evil, God and Satan, believer and unbeliever, God and human consciousness as distinct and separate principles, were deftly and rigorously rejected by Rumi. In his comprehensive writings, he brought them under one singular principle that he called *Love*, the highest consciousness, without denying the reality of physical existence and social realities. Rumi's Love is the only principle that has no opposite. All other pairs of opposites are the extension of the same single source, implying that all phenomena originate from a single source of Love but exist with multiple names and identities. In other words, the principle of Love is not physical matter, but rather mental knowledge that lies within our empirical mind and yet is well-hidden from our everyday experience of the world—thus, Love, in a Rumian sense, is the highest internal perspective to understand all physical phenomena.

The non-dualism that Rumi articulated shares much with the non-dualism of certain Indian traditions, as will be discussed in chapters 6A and 6B. Rumi could be considered a prolific and pioneering philosopher (after the appearance of scattered utterances of Hallāj,

Bāyazīd, and those who later followed suit, such as Hafiz in the fourteenth century) in establishing the tradition of non-dualism in an Islamic context, although thus far his philosophy, because of the over-sentimentalization of his Sufism and "divine love" theme, has remained unrecognized in intellectual and philosophical circles.

2. How Would Rumi Fit in as a Philosopher?

Rumi the Poet and the Sage

For better or worse, Rumi has consistently been identified as a poet. Although this seems an honorable and qualified label, being confined to the role of poet has kept him from being considered a broader thinker and even a "philosopher" because the two roles have always been mutually exclusive in the Persian world—even though the great philosophers such as Avicenna (d. 1037), Khayyam (d. 1131), and Mullā Sadrā (d. 1640) also composed poetry in addition to philosophical prose. But many great philosophers and founders of other ancient schools have expressed their ideas in metaphorical short-versed poems and have been considered philosophers first and foremost, consideration of the content of their writings taking precedence over the form. For example, the composition of *Tao Te Ching* by Lao Tzu is poetical. The sayings of the Buddha in *Dhamapada* are also in the form of short stanzas. Multiple *Upanishads* are composed with symbolism. Even the *Koran*, in its original Arabic, is written in rhymed poetic form. But no one thinks of Lao Tzu, the Buddha, the Upanishadic yogis, and Mohammad primarily as poets. Poetry has been the means of transmitting wisdom in many ancient cultures, and in these cases it can be recognized as the work of a broader philosophy rather than simply literature. Perhaps no poetry in Persian can be better classified as the basis of a philosophical system than the works of Rumi, Hafiz, and the *rubā'īs* of Khayyam, because of their vigorous attention to the flux of time and the joy of human existence, not to mention their skeptical formulations about the role of mysterious celestial forces in the creation and operation of the world. Poetry, however, became a literary license to innocuously challenge various established issues of culture and metaphysics.

Many may disagree with the idea that Rumi was a "philosopher" (let alone the founder of a new non-Sufi, non-sectarian philosophical-spiritual school) at all because of the style of his poetry, which has traditionally been viewed as a continuation of the trend in lyrical poetry begun by his Persian-language predecessors such as Sanā'ī and 'Attar. The failure to categorize Rumi as a philosopher, and the progeny of

philosophers such as Fārābī, and Suhravardī, is itself due to a problem that stems from the historiographical approach to philosophy and mysticism, categorizing them as separate, distinct schools. Separating philosophy from mysticism denies the interconnection of human psychological faculties that search for a comprehensive solution to the human predicament. The combination of philosophy and mysticism is, in a way, a combination of knowledge and practice. For example, for Fārābī, the second classical philosopher in the Islamic world (after Kindī), there was no distinction between ideas and practice. As time passed, poetry became more associated with mysticism and not so much with the world of philosophy, wherein the façade appeared as rhymed poetry but its core carried a message.

If we take the example of the Buddha, with his spiritual and mystical experiences that became the foundation of a new philosophy (as well as spirituality), it must be admitted that he did not invent a new philosophy; he simply presented his version of liberation from suffering from a different angle in the Brahmanical-Vedic context. But the key thing here is that the Buddha is not viewed primarily as a "Hindu mystic" or "poet." His teachings evolved to become the basis for a distinct spiritual-philosophical school. In a similar manner, Rumi, after his transformative time with Shams (discussed in detail in chapters 3 and 4), poured out his ideas in the form of poetry or short-versed teachings, laying the foundation for a spiritual path to liberation from misperception, erroneous views, and wrong practices. Rumi's experiences may have been mystical, but his writings went further, intended to become the basis for a new philosophy (similar to the mechanism of the Buddha's *nirvanic* expressions being turned into a new philosophy). But in the case of Rumi, it did not happen. The creation of a new spiritual-philosophical school out of Rumi's universal teachings was derailed by the emergence of the early Ottoman Emirate, which may have locked down the possibility of any way of thinking that would compete with the Islamism of the Ottomans, or at least a type of Islamism as a means to justify their military conquest. So Rumi's universal and innovative principle was downgraded to a simple esoteric, mystical level, a kind of nice poetry combined with dance and music, something acceptable to the Ottoman Islamic and Sufi culture. The whole mystical Sufi culture buried any other interpretation of Rumi's non-religious, non-ethnic, and non–geographically bound philosophy.

Giving Rumi the status of "philosopher," or recognizing that his teachings do not completely fit inside the Islamic and Sufi context, requires challenging those who made Rumi's historical Sufi-Mevlevi

case absolute without, thus far, an attitude of self-correction. A new narrative of Rumi, therefore, would have to be adopted, which would do away with the fixity given to Rumi's status and the content of his teachings. From Rumi's perspective, self-correction meant avoiding the arrogance and ignorance inherent in any fundamentalist approach, including Rumi's own approach to his earlier belief system. He allowed Shams to "reinvent" a new Rumi, and rejected his own previously held religious dogma. Thus, Rumi introduced his non-absolutism by setting himself as a fluid example of this mode of thinking.

This book investigates what philosophical ideas Rumi developed in place of his earlier religious beliefs. In particular, after spending time learning the secret oral teachings of Shams, Rumi formulated a philosophy that uprooted religious dualistic thinking. In Shams' and Rumi's universal unity, the whole of existence—past and present, animate and inanimate, human beings of different races and religions—belongs to a single principle that Shams and Rumi called *Love* (*'Ishq*). They went on to reject all other dualistic notions of believer and non-believer, good and evil, the worshipper and the worshipped, that had been the foundation of religious and scholastic thinking. The oral transmission went unrevealed to such an extent that Rumi called it "Shams' Secrets" (*Asrār-e Shams*), though it was partly revealed in the recorded discourses (*Maqālāt*) of Shams and presented, mostly allegorically, by Rumi throughout his poetical compositions of *Divan*.

Rumi learned through his encounter with Shams that his spiritual growth and philosophical sophistication was no longer based on metaphysical thought, no longer mosque-based or theology-based, but depended first on highly developed and centuries-old oral teachings that Shams transmitted on a one-to-one basis, and finally on an experiential initiative. The series of oral teachings given by Shams to a small circle, behind closed doors, remained secret. As Rumi recanted his traditional theological and mystical exercises, he opened himself up to learning new practices from Shams, such as whirling dance, listening to and playing musical instruments, meditation, and visualizing themes, all as means to remove the centrality of the body and the external physical world. Shams' teachings also inspired Rumi to continue the tradition through complete dedication to, and even deification of, the master.

Rumi entered a world of experiences beyond the conventional mind, beyond the religiosity of culture and time, and beyond the boundaries of language. His goal became the psychological expansion of the mind to experience the true nature of existence beyond its multiplicities and its impermanent surface. Based on his writings,

his approach is not about self-improvement. Nor is it about ascetic renunciation, nor about taking delight in the world—it is something in between the two, something beyond renunciation and delight. Authors with religious sympathies often project their own religiosity onto Rumi and interpret him as a dutiful Muslim. But if they choose to shift the angle of their religious interpretation, a different narrative can emerge.

Rumi's use of religious terms and literature led religious-minded people to interpret them in their own favor. For example, his use of the concept of *miʿrāj*, which many translators and authors have misread in a literal religious sense to mean the Prophet's nocturnal journey on a winged horse accompanied by an angel to Heaven, in fact represents the highest level of understanding and liberation from the colors of personal thoughts—a short glimpse of the ultimate reality. Rumi has used the word in a literal sense, meaning *spiritual ascension*, *enlightenment*, rather than in its usual literal religious sense. It is a concept used to imply full knowledge of the true nature of reality, beyond the journey of a winged horse, covering time and distances in going up and down and beyond the fluctuating views (M: III: 619–29; M: IV: 663). In the same context, a closer reading of Shams' *Maqālāt* and Rumi's *Divan* suggests an alternative for the frequent mention of the name of *Mohammad* as an ascetic and accomplished dervish. This reading contrasts with the usual interpretation of him as the founder of a conquering religion, an interpretation that many rulers (using *jihad* and *ghaza* to justify their expansionism[6]) and eager theologians used to coerce the public to convert and to mislead them about the intrusive role of Mohammad.

The prevalent tendency to attach Rumi's universal message solely to Semitic monotheism limits the man to the very time, region, and dogma that he attempted in his poetry to transcend. Despite Rumi's own clear challenges to religious ritualism, such as his reprimanding Muslims who make a pilgrimage to *Kaʿba* instead of exploring their inner god, religiously oriented authors still try to attach Rumi to the proponents of a religious culture with a dogma of an external God and *Kaʿba* symbolizing it. The opposition to Mecca pilgrimage (which has no Koranic basis) was a direct challenge to the central authority of the Abbasid caliphate and to those who apparently propagated the *hadīth* of pilgrimage to *Kaʿba*. The pilgrimage disapproval seems to have been started by Bāyazīd (d. 874), and was taken up again by Hallāj (d. 922), a key reason for which he was arrested and executed. Rumi, by giving it a poetical twist, also opposes the dogma of physical performance of pilgrimage (see D: 648). To Rumi, the human

heart became *Ka'ba* (*Ka'ba-e dil*) and the ritual of circumambulation around it was replaced by whirling dance. In other words, if Rumi used religious anecdotes to transmit his message, it was because he believed the truth should be told within the stories of others. From Rumi's point of view, there was no more palatable way than religious themes to transfer a new consciousness to people; he was not simply repeating stories. Rumi's use of this method may at the same time have become the basis for his seemingly paradoxical poems.

On the other hand, detaching prophets such as Mohammad from the dogmatic religion that was formed after him was a way for Rumi, as influenced by Shams, to be able to see Mohammad as a symbol of spiritual searching and an explorer of pure consciousness, or the "light of Mohammad" (*nur-e mohammadi*), an archetype beyond religion and non-religion. In the same vein, the metaphor of "light," in the Illuminationist School of Suhravardī's interpretation, meant the "rising of the sun," or extraordinary knowledge, a vision that was understood to mean that "knower, known and knowing" are one.[7] The "light" in Rumi's context can be interpreted as a metaphor, not radiating from Mohammad's physical body or his prophecy, but representing an ongoing pure consciousness of those seekers like Mohammad who made a genuine discovery of the ultimate reality, or Love, instead of establishing a geographical kingdom. In fact, Rumi writes that when the tribal rulers of Arabia came to Mohammad to divide the land to govern, Mohammad revealed to them that his kingdom was a permanent one, unlike the worldly impermanent ones. The tribal monarchs, including his own uncles, perceived Mohammad to be an ascetic and a sorcerer, not interested in land and kingdom (M: IV: 767–8). Here Rumi not only distances himself from the warring Muslims, but distances Mohammad from them as well. Shams and Rumi, similar to their innovative predecessors, seem to have held Mohammad and Islam as two different and separate entities—perhaps as a circumspect strategy to deconstruct the religio-political authority.

In attempting to create a new narrative about Rumi, we need a clearer view of many metaphors but especially the metaphor of Love and Rumi's application of it. The notion of Love itself in Rumi's poetry has been subject to many interpretations, and likely misinterpretations, since the word has many shades of meaning and can be interpreted in various ways. The most popular misreading of the term *Love* is vagueness of "divine love," which many authors and speakers on the subject of Rumi expound upon. But after a careful reading of Rumi's writings, a newer, more comprehensive interpretation of Rumi's notion of *Mazhab-e 'Ishq*, "Religion of Love," shows that it

fits into a universal philosophy free from any personal, dogmatic, or theological interpretation of good and evil, believer and non-believer, heaven and hell. In addition, the religion of Love designated a world free from the imposition of specific beliefs on the permanent and incorporeal reality of existence that lies outside of anthropocentric discourse. This reality he symbolically called *Love,* and other times *Shams*, with its silent (*khāmoush*) and non-articulating nature. In the same vein, Rumi's references to the name *Shams* in his *Divan* have undoubtedly led to the ongoing misreading that the person of Shams is the focus of Rumi, while all along (most of the time) Rumi was actually referring to the bodiless Shams-consciousness.

In Rumi's philosophical mind, there lied one truth: all variety of religions and human cultures were sheer impermanent conventions against the immutable background of existence. Against this backdrop, both religious faith and lack of faith seemed churlish and unfitting. Rumi's innovative philosophical idea of reassessing fleeting religions against the unchanging permanence of Love has thus far not received the treatment it merits, especially in connection with other philosophical schools of thought.

The immutable nature of Love is therefore the focus of Rumi's lyrical poetry. In this way, Rumi's thought resembles that of such great schools of non-dualist philosophy as *advaita* Vedanta and Kashmir Shaivism (to be discussed in chapters 6A and B). Rumi's non-self philosophy (*bī-khwīshī*) is a paradigm of mind that taps into a bodiless, egoless reality without a permanent center. Such a non-self philosophy, as it is called in Buddhism, is in fact a prerequisite of Buddha's teachings, in which the self or sensorial faculties play no role in penetrating into the unthinkable *nirvanic* state. From this perspective, Rumi and the Buddha share a stunning similarity (to be discussed in chapter 6A). These and other aspects of Rumi's poetry are studied in comparison with these three Asian schools in order to establish parallels among them.

Such comparative studies are a path to understanding Rumi's philosophy as a non-isolated event in the history of the East and of human thought and spirituality. Being born in a Muslim milieu in the thirteenth century meant that Rumi was exposed to Islamic writings in Arabic and Persian. Yet somehow his ideas came very close to those of various Asian schools without his having any access to Sanskrit, Pali, or Tibetan materials. Ibn 'Arabi, as a Muslim theosopher/Sufi of the thirteenth century, also probably could not have known about the Taoist philosophy of Lao Tzu of the fifth century BCE or Chuang Tzu of the third century BCE. Yet when the late Toshihiko

Izutsu (d. 1993) undertook a comparative study of the two systems of thought, Sufism and Taoism, through a transcultural and philological investigation,[8] he was able to demonstrate their similarities. Rumi, a de facto "intercultural philosopher," unknowingly integrated many old thoughts from other systems and traditions into his non-self and non-dualist approach.

Up until now, Rumi's writings have been presented as being place- and time-bound. By taking a comparative intercultural approach, this book attempts to make the placelessness and timelessness of his philosophical message apparent.

Can We Associate Rumi with Philosophy?

Rumi was in favor of seeking deep knowledge of existence by using intuition, logic, experiential knowledge, and language to understand both ultimate reality and the material world. He never questioned whether existence had any meaning, but he did ask if anyone could experience the immortal aspect of existence. He learned about the nature of existence through his personal experience, and thus philosophized about it. Rumi's multiple poems against "*falsafa*" philosophy should be interpreted as aimed at those who were pedantic or purely intellectual scholars of religion, those without direct experience of the ultimate truth.

Rumi's writings at first glance may appear more like scattered bits of poetic wisdom than a coherent philosophy. But his writings do point in a specific direction, towards a structure of understanding, a positivistic model, and cognitive means of understanding existence. In this way, he is doing the work of a philosopher, although his non-discursive and poetic style lacks an order of topics. It is left for others to assemble the foundation of his philosophy based on the messages, examples, and metaphors that he provides in his writings.

His writings are not obviously systematic, like those of Ibn 'Arabī (d. 1240), Shahāb al-Din Suhravardī (d. 1191), Mullā Sadrā (d. 1640), or the even more discursive philosopher Avicenna (d. 1037); nor like those of the *dahrī* (materialist) polymath and philosopher Zakaryyā al-Rāzī (d. ca. 932). The philosopher Ibn Rushd, known as Averroes (d. 1198), despite his interest in researching religious subjects, became quite famous for his work on logic and interpretation of Aristotelian thought in Europe and the Islamic world. He also harshly criticized the dogmatic work and criticism of al-Ghazzālī (d. 1111) for trying to derail the logic of Aristotle as well as Avicenna's interpretation of Aristotle. Ibn Rushd's work became popular among the

proponents of early "secular thought" in Europe, but his works were viewed with suspicion and not widely circulated in the Islamic world. Rumi was in a sense an experiential philosopher and enjoyed the license to poeticize his ideas; their universalism is being acknowledged today in the West and worldwide, as was Ibn Rushd's eight hundred years ago. Rumi narrowly escaped the suspicion of the Islamic jurists, although his mentor, Shams Tabrizi, did not and was forced into exile several times. A number of free thinkers, however, were persecuted on charges of heresy and mystical-philosophical innovation intending to corrupt the religion of God and were even put to death (e.g., Hallāj). In the case of Rāzī (as well as Ibn Rawandi [d. 911]), his philosophical works, mostly critical of prophecy and religious dogma, were suppressed and many of them destroyed, but he was fortunate to escape a violent death.

Having survived religious condemnation, Rumi continued his dancing and his composition of verses about the equality of Muslims and non-Muslims, believers and non-believers, and many other things that could have led him to be accused of heresy. Remaining a poet (like Hafiz a generation later) may have allowed him to freely use allegories and metaphors in his work, albeit often with double meanings. Despite the fact that Rumi is not commonly known as a philosopher in the Islamic world, his poetical and metaphorical approach provides a basis for a philosophical system similar to that found in Lao Tzu's short stanzas—not systematic, but a kind of mysticism that, in Lao Tzu's case, provided the foundation of Taoist philosophy.

While Rumi, like some others who were later perceived as philosophers, did not claim to be a philosopher, he did use language to convey knowledge and inquire into the ultimate essence of existence. If "philosophy" literally means "love of knowledge," or a means to understand the nature of existence, Rumi definitely did not fall short in attaining knowledge and transmitting it. His life epitomized his philosophy, like those of the true philosophers of pre-modern times who never used language solely for wordplay and intellectual purposes (*bī ʿilm o ʿamal*, "without intuitive knowledge and practice," D: 2251, 2858). He expresses distress over the theologians and imitators of mysticism who read and hear things but have no true realization and experience, no definite transformation in their lives. He asks disdainfully why anyone should drink wine and not get drunk, and advises that in that case it is better to drink vinegar instead of wine.[9]

Rumi criticized pedantic and absolutist theoreticians (*estidlālī yoon*) and any philosophy that was empty of direct experience. From an epistemological point of view, he was not necessarily opposed to the term

"philosophy" if it accompanied intuitive understanding. M. Aminrazavi claims that Rumi transmitted a sort of intuitive philosophy, with an epistemology based not on transient sensory experiences or on imitation in between the verses of his massive poetry, but of course he did so in a non-discursive manner.[10] He did not criticize Socrates' and Plato's styles of philosophy or their genuine stoic practice.[11]

Rumi was a philosopher in the Socratic sense of the word, meaning he did not separate practice and theory (D: 2787). Philosophical application of Rumi's writings requires going beyond the poetic, Sufi, and mystical frameworks, but without introducing a methodical, didactic, systematic approach and analysis. Rumi's work was philosophical in the Socratic or Platonic sense of explaining existence through articulating experience and insight. He was not a reclusive mystic-fakir whose experience would remain unarticulated inside him. Rumi explained the truth of existence from different angles, which included his skeptical ideas about whether the existence of the world is beginningless and endless or has a linear history with a fixed beginning and an abrupt end (discussed in chapter 5B). With ideas that encompassed deciphering the ultimate experience of consciousness, he went on to lay a foundation for humanistic universalism and the equality of all people in the world. He was troubled by the divisions between groups of human beings, whether religious, ethnic, or linguistic, as he watched them become blind to their common root, leading to perpetual wars. He therefore responded to the intractable problem of the dogmatic religious division between believer and nonbeliever with rigorous universalism.

It has remained controversial within Islam that Rumi exempted heretics, polytheists, and non-believers from defending their non-Islamic beliefs before God. He symbolically saves God from the mischievous Evil who deconstructs what God tries to bring to people—whether God allowed Evil to exist has been a long-standing debate within Islam alongside the long struggle for the rights of non-Muslims. From Rumi's point of view, even the polytheists carry something sacred in them, and he believes the responsibility for being virtuous lies in the behavior of humans, not in their belief in God. Disbelief in God, theodicy, and dualities such as heaven versus hell and good versus bad are all made irrelevant in Rumi's poetical and philosophical approach. Evil is no longer an issue in Rumi's world. In monotheistic religion, the implications of evil and the imperfect human mind led God to choose prophecy as the solution. Rumi addresses the problem of such a dualistic religious approach and encourages independent and personal salvation outside of a theological framework. Thus, he cannot

be viewed through a solely religious lens or as "anti-philosophical." Rumi's natural pragmatism cannot be separated from his mysticism.

Rumi was not obsessed with metaphysical speculations or with proving the existence of God; nor was he a purely deductive rationalist or an idealist. He was least concerned with whether the world was created or uncreated, and he was neither a moralist nor fatalist.

Rumi maintained firm views about the non-dual state of the ultimate and primordial reality that he called *Love*, even though he extrapolated from it the ideas of causality, duality, and the pluralism of the world. His mystical visualization of the non-fluctuating and immortal state of existence was also a piece of his philosophy, articulated in many different eloquent images. He dealt with the existential dilemma of human beings living in an impermanent and fleeting world.

To Rumi, at the very core of the human philosophical riddle are the concepts of "being" and "time," which are both historical and metahistorical, and even outside of time. He believed many human experiences and ideas, even as sacred as they seemed, were empty of substance and vulnerable to the flux of time because they lacked an in-depth understanding of the highest and unchanging reality and truth—the central theme of his *Divan*. Furthermore, his approach to "social philosophy" is firmly based on a method of observation and reflection, addressing the interrelationship of people in the anecdotes of the *Masnavi*.

The division of Rumi's ideas into various subcategories is a task that should be undertaken with more precision in the future by those trained in the relevant disciplines. For our purposes in this book it suffices to identify Rumi, alongside his world of poetry and mysticism, with non-dualist and intercultural philosophy.

Conclusion

The goal of this book is to introduce an alternative approach for exploring the dynamic intellectual innovation that pre-modern mystics and philosophers in the restrictive Islamic world tried to achieve. It is also important and quite appropriate for our generation to commit ourselves to the responsible exploration of comparative transcultural approaches, particularly in regard to thinkers like Rumi, whose universal philosophies have been trapped within the limitations of a localized religion. This book will not be able to cover all of the many themes and dimensions that Rumian studies require, but by covering multiple topics it aims to create a basis for a new narrative about Rumi.

Rumi and Shams' Silent Rebellion provides a small window into Rumi's powerful philosophy, and into the early years when Rumi rebelled against his own and his ancestral dogmatic past. This rebellion, of course, was not only against his memories and practices of the past but also against many of the dualistic and discriminatory beliefs being upheld in the religious scholastic milieu—a rebellion aimed at bringing all humanity under one banner, establishing one truth, and teaching defiance against any negative and structured dualism that distorts the broader picture of human existence.

> Rebel (*setīzeh kon*) because the rebellion of the noble ones is delightful,
> Find an excuse, as the statues (*botān*) are only excuses symbolizing a genuine creed (*ā'een*). (D: 479)

> Silence yourself; use another language and speak of the new paradigm (*rasm-e nou*).
> Why repeat the old paradigm (*rasm-e kohneh*) perpetually? (D: 2982)

Chapter 2

The Need for a New Interpretation of Shams and Rumi: *Maqālāt* and *Divan*

These days, certain catchphrases and narratives are automatically elicited by the mention of the name "Rumi": Jalal al-Din Mohammad Balkhi, known as Rumi (1207–1273; born in Balkh, present-day Afghanistan), as a theologian who turned "Sufi mystic" upon meeting Shams; Rumi as an "Islamic mystic"; Rumi as the "founder of the Mevlevi order"; Rumi as "whirling dervish"; Rumi as prolific poet who used metaphors of wine, women, and Shams in his work to represent "divine love" and "union with God."

But there is a philosophy hidden in his poetry that is distinct from Islam, Sufism, and sentimental transcendentalism. This philosophy may now be laid open and discussed because of the availability in full of Shams' *Maqālāt*, in addition to a large number of tantalizing *ghazals* in the *Divan* and couplets in the *Masnavi*. The field of Rumian studies has yet to discover the potency of the *Divan* and Shams' *Maqālāt*—the two works that may eventually derail and render obsolete scores of earlier, simplistic interpretations of Rumi.

Until very recently, Shams' *Discourses* (*Maqālāt*) was not widely available. Both the *Maqālāt* and Rumi's own lyrical poetry of the *Divan* (in its broader version) surfaced when the Mevlevi Sufi order was banned after the fall of the Ottoman Empire in 1925. The full Iranian printing of the *Divan* was made possible by using the Indian (Lucknow) editions of 1917 and 1925. The Iranian *Divan* has fewer verses than the Indian and the original Persian versions held in Turkey,

and their differences require new research. When one looks carefully at the whole story of Rumi's personal transformation, with attention to the details of the new material available in these recently revealed books, an entirely different narrative can emerge that diverges from the standard Islamic-Sufi story. A new narrative about Rumi is necessary to reveal another dimension of his thought, beyond the clichéd scholastic Sufi and Islamic image to which he has been limited and that is perpetuated in all secondary sources. It was the Islamic politics of Rumi's time that heavily influenced the rush to establish the Mevlevi dervish order after his death, and began spinning the Mevlevi Sufi cocoon that would ultimately be tightly wrapped around his memory. In fact, during his lifetime Rumi never showed any interest in establishing a Sufi order. But because of the existence of the Mevlevi order, which became Islamized gradually over a vague period during the Ottoman time, the Islamic biases of authors writing about Rumi even in modern times have also perpetuated the Islamic-Sufi biographical narrative. As a result, Rumi remains largely hostage to the single historical construction that was a byproduct of Ottomanism. The intention in this book is not to deconstruct what has been constructed, but rather to present an alternative narrative of Rumi that emphasizes his universal, philosophical, and non-sectarian non-dualism.

The old narrative includes a predictable style of interpreting his poetry from the viewpoint of Sufism, with "standard" presentations of the meanings of the sentimental or divine love themes, and of the categories and other symbolism inherent in Rumi's writings. The danger of traditional Rumian studies is that by locking Rumi into a "single story,"[1] other facets and interpretations of Rumi's teachings have been ignored. We have been presented with an inflexible story of Rumi that invades our impressions of him and his message. This narrative of Rumi is based not primarily on his poetry or Shams' discourses, but instead on the chronicles and biographies that cannot be treated as fully authoritative about Rumi's world; the prevalent narrative does not necessarily provide a reliable link between reality and ideas of the authors of their chronicles.[2]

The intention of this book is to revisit the historical Rumi through his poetry and Shams' teachings and to demonstrate how Rumi overthrew the scholastic and religious paradigm to construct a new paradigm of spirituality and philosophy. This new universal paradigm contains remarkable parallels with other spiritual philosophies, and particularly some prominent Asian schools. The goal of this book is thus to rewrite the standard single and self-perpetuating narrative about Rumi and trace the evolution of his surprising transformation.

One of the ongoing issues in Rumian studies is the deeply rooted anachronism of Rumi's association with Mevlevi Sufism, a claim widespread in secondary sources. The zealous Islamization of Sufism involving the Shams-Rumi enterprise also requires attention. The term "Sufi," especially in a religious context, has itself been clumsily used to classify all mendicancy within the Islamic world and as a label for any thinker or mystic from the Islamic territories with innovative, odd, or unconventional spiritual tendencies.[3] The term "Sufi" has also been used to bring unconventional mystics and their at times un-Islamic ideas under the prophetic and Koranic umbrella. But as certain chronicles point out, various groups and spiritual practitioners, such as Malāmatīs and Qalandarīs, in fact had maintained anti-Sufi positions.

It is distorted and one-sided to label Rumi and his philosophy as purely "Sufi" or "Islamic mysticism." The incongruity is addressed in detail in chapter 4; it suffices here to refer to it as the Ottomanization of Rumi, undertaken without a full evaluation of Shams' *Maqālāt* and Rumi's *Divan* in a broader and transcultural context in the fields of spirituality and philosophy. For seven centuries the Mevlevi Sufi order has claimed Rumi as its own. Any attempt to extricate him from this Islamic Sufi cocoon presents a historical challenge to the Mevlevi order's strong and largely unquestioned historical legacy. It is true that Rumi grew up in and was surrounded by Sufi circles throughout his life. To separate him from Sufism completely also seems difficult, especially when he frequently refers to the Sufis in his own poetry. But this does not necessarily mean that he maintained his previous Islamic jurist and scholastic Sufi views after he met the eccentric Shams. Rumi repeatedly admits that he was a pious theologian-ascetic, but something happened to his piety and common sense (*mard-e mojāhid budam, ʿāqil o zāhid budam*) so that that man "flew away like a bird" (D: 2244). Indeed, Rumi refers to Sufis in his poetry in a positive way—as he does other groups, including Christians, Zoroastrians, Muslims, Jews, and even pagans—as part of his universalist philosophy.

Modern authors' tendency to portray Rumi's teachings as aligning with Islamic ritualism and jurisprudence and to assume that he was exclusively an Islamic thinker and mystic throws more dust to cover up his non-Islamic and nonconformist verses. This assumption may at first glance seem warranted, because Rumi did refer to Koranic verses and prophetic *hadīth*s, as well as to biblical prophets, in his didactic and spiritual scholarship in the couplets of the *Masnavi*. This Islamic perception of his work has been emphasized and replicated over and over, perpetuating a one-dimensional view of his "teachings" without

a broader consideration of his *Divan*'s content and the circumstances of his life, which came under heavy influence from Shams. Rumi's abandonment of the theological and Sufi fraternity, his commitment to lifelong dance and music, and his eventual development of a rebellious philosophy expressed in poetry are all evidence that he did not settle for a parochial view. (The details of this view are presented in chapters 5A and 5B.)

HISTORICAL HABITS AND MISCONCEPTIONS IN RUMIAN STUDIES

A number of problems and issues have created obstacles to fully studying Rumi's writings and putting his message into a broader perspective. These range from the distorted biographies of Rumi by the early Ottoman and Mevlevi biographers, to the fact that Shams' *Discourses* (*Maqālāt*) was kept hidden and Rumi's *Divan* was barely accessible until modern times, all the way to the biased Islamic and traditional Sufi views of modern authors.

Multiple modern authors and scholars inside and outside the Persianate world have exercised their religious and scholarly weight in preventing a broader understanding of Rumi.[4] Most modern writers about Rumi have assumed that he was a purely scholastic Sufi bound by the dogma of religion and that he elaborated on "divine love" through an exclusively Islamic lens.[5] But Rumi's *ghazals* and Shams' prose in the *Maqālāt* are fertile ground for newly emerging interpretations—not only for delving more deeply into the two men's discussions, but also for understanding the nature of their philosophical approach to human experience of the highest reality. The *Maqālāt* is an important piece of the literary puzzle of Shams and Rumi that many previous scholars did not take into account.[6]

Another issue is the conceptualization of Rumi during the Ottoman period, including the Ottoman contribution to the biographical construction of Rumi. The Mevlevi dervish order in the Ottoman lands has always implied that the order's foundation is based on the Islamic teachings of Rumi and that he and his associate Husām al-Din, and eventually Sultan Valad, were the founders of the order. To substantiate this claim, they depended on Rumi's grandchildren becoming central figures of the order and on the biographical construction of Shams-Rumi by those who were affiliated with the Mevlevi order. We shall return to this topic in chapter 4.

It may seem as though all the historical pieces to connect Rumi with the founding of the Mevlevi order were present. But the Mevlevi

Sufi connection with Rumi is based on flawed and anachronistic assumptions. It was future generations, under peculiar sociopolitical circumstances as the Ottomans were coming to power, who decided to attribute their own strong version of Sufism to Rumi; that did not originate from the man himself, as we learn from the primary sources—the *Maqālāt*, the *Divan*, and Sultan Valad's *Ebtidā Nāmeh.* While Rumi did teach Sufism to crowds earlier in his life, after the arrival of Shams in Konya he chose solitude, dance, music, and meditation instead.

But the claim that Rumi was a Mevlevi Sufi, and the order's central guru, is based on the claims of the Mevlevi order—created *after* Rumi died. Almost seven centuries have elapsed, and the Mevlevi order was dissolved in 1925, but the anachronistic dominant narratives and rumors have persisted.

Shortly after Rumi's death, his early Ottoman hagiographers, such as Fereydoun Sepahsalar and then Shams al-Din (Ahmed) Aflaki, romanticized and exaggerated the story of Shams and Rumi, sometimes (especially Aflaki) with unrealistically rumor-laden story details.[7] Even though Aflaki (a disciple of 'Aref Çelebi, Rumi's grandson) drew upon sources that included Rumi's poetry and Shams' *Maqālāt*, as well as Sultan Valad's poetry in *Ebtidā Nāmeh*,[8] he could not resist romanticizing Rumi and Shams (see chapter 4). This is because Rumi himself does not provide any details about his meeting with Shams and his training; in fact, he gives no account of Shams other than declaring his complete obedience to this mysterious man, virtually making him into a new god.[9]

The reasons for the mismeasure of Rumi's world are complex, but one general problem is with those biographies that accommodate Rumi to Ottoman culture and the Mevlevi Sufi order, while apparently ignoring the content of Rumi's poetry. In other words, the biographers' stories of Shams and Rumi are based on the authors' own handpicked anecdotes and their personal perspectives, not on a solid analysis of Rumi's poetry and Shams' *Maqālāt.* Amid the discrepancy between Rumi's philosophy through poetry and the biased biographical constructions, the fact remains that Rumi's transformation was because of Shams and that Shams inspired all his lyrical poetry.

Because of the need for caution in reyling on the biased biographies of Rumi by the Ottoman biographers, the present book cannot elaborate much on the Shams-Rumi sentimental relationship except to focus on the messages transmitted in Shams' *Discourses* and in Rumi's *Divan* and *Masnavi.* This book is primarily concerned with

Rumi's philosophical perspective and in shifting the historiographical approach to Shams-Rumi innovativeness.

HISTORY OF THE TEXTS AND THE MISSING VERSES

The other obstacle to constructing an alternative paradigm for Rumi's world has been the lack of attention given a large number of non-Islamic and philosophical poems totaling about 34,662 lines (in the form of *ghazals*) in the Iranian version (Forouzānfar version: total of 42,594 lines). The Iranian version of the *Divan* is based on the largest edition[10] to appear outside of the Ottoman lands, published in Lucknow, India, and which was reprinted with more poems in 1917 and in 1925 with about 50,000 lines.[11] The Indian edition was itself based on the 44,829 lines in the original Persian of the Ottoman version. The discrepancies and missing verses in the Iranian version have yet to be accounted for.

The *Divan* first appeared publicly in Iran when Reza Quli Khan Hedāyat published a brief, abridged version of 9,000 lines entitled *Shams ul-Haqāyeq* in 1863.[12] In 1939–40 Asadullah Izad Goshasb published a large selection from the *Divan*, titled *Jazabiyyāt-e Ilāhiyya*, with a painstaking introduction and passionate interpretation of certain poems. Jalal al-Din Humāi, who also added more poems in his 1956 edition of the *Divan*, believed the most complete version of it was the one lithographed in Lucknow in 1925, in which he found many "floating poems," that allegedly did not belong to Rumi or were non-authentic.[13] It was the great Iranian scholar of Rumi, Badi'u-Zamān Forouzānfar, who edited and finalized the text of the *Divan*. At first Forouzānfar could not find a complete version of the *Divan* and had to wait; by 1935, he had confirmed that the Lucknow edition of 1925 contained flaws that needed to be edited, and floating poems not authored by Rumi that needed to be removed.[14] This claim of Forouzānfar must be assessed against the backdrop of the religious atmosphere of the times in Iran; a large number of the poems of the *Divan* probably had a threatening heretical tone, and therefore were edited out. For the same reason, the modern government of Turkey did not allow the translation into and publication in English of the last volumes of the complete *Divan*, which has been addressed by Nevit O. Ergin in *The Forbidden Rumi: The Suppressed Poems of Rumi on Love, Heresy, and Intoxication* (2006). The apparently "forbidden" poems are still part of the complete version of about 44,829 lines, including 1,700 quatrains, which is based on the Persian version handwritten by Hasan ibn Osman (al-Maulavi) in 1366–68, translated into Turkish

by Abdülbaki Gölpinarli (d. 1982).[15] From the Islamic point of view, these so-called non-circulating poems, if they fell into the hands of the public, could be considered heretical and threatening to the general religious belief and result in a shift of attitude towards Rumi.

The most monumental *Divan* in Iran, edited by Forouzānfar, appeared in ten volumes containing 34,662 lines (plus some 7,932 lines of *tarjī band* and *rubā'ī*), for a total of 42,594 lines published between 1957 and 1967. But if the original Persian version of the Ottoman *Divan* contained 44,829 lines (disregarding the Lucknow edition of 50,000 lines), Forouzānfar's *Divan* is still missing over 2,200 lines. Despite the absence of the missing or suppressed poems, a number of *ghazals* and *rubā'ī*s in the current Iranian version of Rumi's *Divan* still contain inflammatory ideas against the religious establishment and its ritualism. It has only been in the last eighty years or so that research in Iran has allowed Iranian readers the knowledge of Rumi's lyrical and even his heavily non-religious poems (though not all of them) alongside Shams' discourses. At the very least, there is a need in the future to compare and bring to light the suppressed poems that never appeared in print in Iran or in the West.

The *Divan*'s monumental and often non-religious content remained largely unacknowledged outside of the Ottoman territory for about seven centuries (other than in India, with scattered lines preserved in certain Sufi centers elsewhere). In contrast—and not surprisingly, considering the Sufi and religious biographical points of view that have dominated—Rumi's *Masnavi*, with its Koranic references and Islamic tone, has been given careful and high attention; it has even been pointed out by modern authors that it took exactly twelve years for Rumi to complete it. But the timing and circumstances of the *Divan*'s composition remained almost completely obscure. Religiously biased readings of the Shams-Rumi collaboration have downplayed or sentimentalized the message in the *Divan* that describes Rumi's radical transformation because of Shams, his adoption of non-Islamic practices of dance, music, visualization, meditation, and silence, and his veneration of bodiless Shams in a form of a deity, clearly expressed in his poetry.

With the fall of the Ottomans, copies of one of the works tightly protected by the Mevlevi dervishes—the *Maqālāt* (Discourses) of Shams—surfaced and were placed in museums in Konya, Ankara, and Istanbul. The outside world, including Iranian (as well as Afghan) readers, became acquainted with this work starting in 1970. It was first explored in the 1940s by Forouzānfar, but because of the variety of manuscripts that surfaced, even he, despite the significance of this

work for the students of Rumi, was reluctant to commit himself to the task of editing and bringing the text into one single harmonious document. The Iranian edition only appeared in 1970, being further edited in the 1970s and 1990s[16] by Mohammad Ali Movvahed, who took the plunge and edited multiple versions of the *Maqālāt* into one single text (the one used in this book); his edition was followed by that of Jafar Modarress Sādeghi.[17]

Given the nonconformist contents of the *Maqālāt* (as well as the *Divan*), the religiosity of the Ottoman culture, and the fanaticism of the theologians of the time, it is a miracle that this work escaped without being destroyed on the grounds of heresy. (Other dissenting and anti-religious texts, such as the philosophical works of Rāzi, were largely destroyed.) In addition to the survival of the *Divan,* it is probably a historical fluke that the *Maqālāt* of Shams (also known as "the Secrets of Shams" or "the Cloak of Shams Tabrizi") was recorded and preserved. The original *Maqālāt* is believed to have been written down (as Shams spoke) by Sultan Valad, or possibly by Rumi himself.[18]

Thus, it has only been in the last several decades that the *Divan* and *Maqālāt* have leaked out from their Ottoman corner to the rest of the world. The *Maqālāt* was almost as unknown to the Persianate world—Iran, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, and India—as to the West.

Access to the *Maqālāt* (and complete *Divan*) outside of the Ottoman Empire was hardly possible before the 1920s for two main reasons. First, the Mevlevi order seems to have guarded these two works in their own inner circle, especially the *Maqālāt* (along with another piece of written material, *Fīhi mā fīh*, attributed to Rumi). Second, it may have been considered perilous for the *Maqālāt* and the *Divan* to be read by ordinary Muslims because of the fear that the Mevlevi order, as well as Shams and Rumi, could be widely known and labeled heretical. This precaution may have been justified, since their oral transmission from the previous generations in some parts of pre-modern Iran, by Rumi himself, and some of his lyrical poetry, especially about Shams, were known as the work of *kufr*, or heretical.

So prior to the mid-nineteenth century, the larger version of the *Divan* and the *Maqālāt* were concealed from the Persianate world. Ironically, they were known only to a small circle of Ottoman dervishes who had to learn Persian in order to read the *Divan* and the *Maqālāt* (as well as the *Masnavi*) and to access the essence of their secret teachings.

In general, this combination of works, one by Rumi and the other containing Shams' utterances, has received less systematic attention (unlike the *Masnavi*), and has never been completely assessed in order

to explore the nature of the rebellion instigated by Shams and carried on by Rumi. Before analyzing and putting into perspective some of Rumi's intended ideas through his colossal output of poetry, let us in the next chapter scrutinize the thoughts and philosophy of the solitary man who transformed Rumi, namely Shams, through the discourses transmitted to us in his *Maqālāt*.

Chapter 3

Shams' Rebellious Paradigm: Listening and Thinking Rumi

Prelude

Shams al-Din Mohammad ibn Ali ibn Malikdād Tabrizi, known as Shams Tabrizi, was a pioneer master who changed Rumi's perception of spirituality and his experience of the supreme state. The essence of the Shams-Rumi experience is as relevant today as it was in the thirteenth century. Their universal, non-sectarian, and timeless message has been overshadowed due to the existing Sufi and religious narrative(s). Understanding Shams and his message can become an analytical conduit for understanding Rumi on a larger scale. Rumi, in distancing himself from his theological tasks and duties, as well as from his old juridical and unquestioning Sufi practices, radically changed the course of his life and raised serious questions about the scholastic Sufism of the time.[1] The path Shams showed Rumi seemed to lie outside of old-fashioned Sufism and even outside of the conventional Islam of his community—but their rebellion was impeded and thrown off course by the Islamic politics of Ottomanism and Sufism of the thirteenth century. There is only one surviving thirteenth-century document in Persian to provide evidence about the unruly approach of Shams when he met Rumi. The manuscript of the *Maqālāt* presents the discourses that Shams shared with Rumi, Rumi's son Sultan Valad, Salāh al-Din, and perhaps with the young Husām al-Din. It was behind closed doors in Konya between 1244 and 1247 that the *Discourses* (*Maqālāt*) of Shams were recorded. However, we do not know if Shams was aware of the talks being recorded, or whether he encouraged it.[2] To understand this inner world of Shams, one must

delve into the existing versions of his *Maqālāt* as a means to make sense out of the rebellious spiritual agendas that ultimately affected Rumi so much. The discussions in this chapter are almost exclusively based on this essential primary source.

The *Maqālāt* is full of tantalizing, even shocking, spiritual ideas. Shrewdly and precisely cutting through the thick layers of spiritual and mystical jargon of the time, Shams presented his core practice and philosophy to Rumi. But Shams was unsure of whether Rumi would appreciate it and do something with it, or he would have to resume his path alone. To Shams' profound pleasure, Rumi embarked on the same path, the uniqueness of his approach influencing and forming Rumi's methods. Thus, Shams was the inspiration for Rumi not only to step out of his old practices as a theologian and scholastic Sufi, but also to construct a new worldview, reflected in his poetry. Let us survey Shams' eccentric personality and explore some of his views, ones that led to the deconstruction of Rumi's previous understandings under Islam and Sufism.

Shams did not demonstrate a commitment to any philosophical, spiritual, or religious conventions. He was not interested in pedantic spiritual and moral undertakings; he was more interested in training the mind and the higher faculties and taming the ego.[3] Shams was not only a Sufi wandering around, boasting about searching for God. That was too ostentatious for him, and he did not miss an opportunity to insult what he considered the superficiality of such characters. He set an even higher goal in both the external and internal realms.

Shams lived a nomadic existence, spiritually as well as physically, traveling from town to town to sit at the feet of great masters, learning the essences of what they had to offer. Given his genuine passion for spiritual knowledge, he kept his options completely open, ready to settle down if any master should demonstrate an intellectual honesty that lived up to their philosophy. But Shams did not like any of the masters he visited, and felt he was giving them more credit than they deserved. Nor did he find a qualified disciple he could engage with and transmit his knowledge to. He simply wandered, practicing a freedom from attachment to homeland and family. His confidence transmits a tendency to put a foggy past behind him while indicating no depressive angst about the future. Living in the moment seemed to constitute the core of his life. He was not concerned about the worldly conventions that other people were attached to. As a celibate he was free. He had the nickname of *parandeh*,[4] Shams the *bird*, who was in constant flight from one place to another. His freedom can be

seen in the realm of his detached mind, detached from the sensation of his body and the fluctuation of his world.

Despite the anachronistic and unverfied claims that he had mastered multiple fields of his time,[5] it is not certain what level of schooling he had attained. It can be safely assumed, however, that he was literate. While he was familiar with numerous authors and books, it can be assumed that, being nomadic, he left books behind upon finishing them. He made a living as a seasonal laborer,[6] both saving his dignity and avoiding dependence on disingenuous people for food, since he seemed to feel that having to sit with them would not be worth the meals. He seems to have traveled with no belongings other than what was stored in his heart and his powerful memory, accompanied by his well-crafted rhetoric.

Qalandarī Ideas in Shams?

Before we investigate the contents of the *Maqālāt*, with its unconventional and unreligious views, let us briefly turn to the platform from which Shams may have launched his ideas. There are strong indications that Shams may have had a Qalandarī background, and the formation of a new group in Konya under the name of *Shems Tebrizi*, who shaved their facial hair and resorted to nonconformist practices, suggests a continuation of Qalandarī practices under a pseudonym. From the ninth century onward, there had been conflict between the theological Islam of the *shari'a*-oriented Sufis and those outside of it, like the Malāmatīs, from whom the Qalandarīs seem to have evolved. Shams' positions on theology and conventional Sufism represent the same type of conflict. Qalandarīs were ascetics without a home, celibate, and barefooted wanderers who upheld transgressive practices disapproved by Islamic legal and moral norms. They would usually appear in public with shaved heads, beards, and even shaved eyebrows. Their eccentric appearance shocked the Muslim communities.

There is broad agreement that the Qalandarīs emerged from the Khurāsān Malāmatīs. The iconic masters of the Malāmatī movement were Ibrahim b. Adham (d. c. 780), whose life and spiritual experiences find parallels with those of the historical Buddha, and Bāyazīd (d. 874), who set the stage for transition to a subsequent group. It is the poet Jāmī (d. 1492) who pointed out that the Malāmatīs' maverick approach paved the way for their nonconformist Qalandarī progeny.[7]

The Qalandarī movement and name seem to have become widespread in the centuries after their first appearance in Khurāsān around the eleventh century. This new ascetic, non-mainstream group

appeared on the sociocultural scene with many characteristics similar to the Malāmatīs. The receptivity of the Malāmatī and Qalandarī groups to extra-Islamic influences makes them unusual in the history of spirituality in the western Asia. In the Mongol and post-Mongol eras, the Qalandarī groups came to dominate ascetic life not only in Khurāsān, but in India, western Iran, Syria, Anatolia, and Egypt. Their audacity in introducing and maintaining unusual practices within the Islamic culture brought them and their leaders under suspicion, and sometimes accusation, of heresy.

A hypothesis has been proposed by the modern Iranian scholar Shafī'i Kadkanī, in his monograph devoted to the Qalandarī, that this unconventional ascetic group grew out of the pre-Islamic Mazdaki group and a later Khurramdīn movement of Bābak.[8] Kadkanī considers the tradition of shaving faces, heads, and eyebrows to be a Sassanid tradition.[9] This hypothesis seems to emphasize the "Iranian" role in the formation of spiritual opposition against Islamic tenets. The presence and infiltration of the Mazdakis in various mystical and political groupings in several historical periods is certainly undeniable.[10] The Mazdakis are also believed to have had a role in various mystical movements during the Mongol Il-Khan period.[11] Nevertheless, as a Gnostic and ascetic group that practiced polygamy and had socioeconomic as well as political agendas, the Mazdakis might not easily fit the ascetic model of the Qalandarīs, who maintained an austere, eccentric, and celibate lifestyle. Thus the "Iranian" hypothesis is untenable.

A number of other hypotheses have been proposed regarding the possible origins of the Qalandarīs, as described in depth by Christiane Tortel. These sources range from Malāmatīs, Zoroastrians, and Mithraists, with their secret societies, all the way to the Central Asian Turco-Shamanists, to Christian, and finally to Indian sources.[12] Tortel would prefer the Indian over the Iranian, Islamic, and Sufi hypotheses for the sources of Qalandarī asceticism.[13] Indian elements had in fact already been introduced to Āzarbāijān and Kurdistān.[14] The assimilation of a variety of practices from previous ascetical traditions, however, makes the Qalandarī seem fairly creative. The shaving of all facial hair was intended to provoke, and it set practitioners apart from Islamic conservatism, in which theologians and even Sufis never dared to shave their beards and heads. If the members of the Shems Tabrīzī movement in the Ottoman period shaved their heads, faces, and even eyebrows, it may have been because the Qalandarīs had infiltrated the Ottoman territories in disguise. The group known as Shems Tebrīzīs was one of several

innovative ascetic groups that included the Bektāshis, Jalālīs, and Jāmis.[15] Later, it was Rumi's grandson (Sultan Valad's son), 'Arif Çelebi, who systematically created what became known as the Mevlevi order under the newly established Islamic Ottoman Empire in 1299 (Rumi having died in 1273).

The Shems Tabrīzī, coming into existence in the shadow of the Mevlevi order, were known as *chār zarb* (*four strikes*), referring to their shaving of the head, eyebrows, mustache, and beard. Apparently, despite the religious restrictions of the Ottomans, the Mevlevis (by observing *Shari'a*) and the Shems Tabrīzīs (by maintaining certain unconventional practices) each seem to have managed to keep some of the elements of Shams' and Rumi's lifestyle alive. These two groups were the ones who kept the *Maqālāt* of Shams concealed from the public eye for seven centuries, until the downfall of the Ottomans, when all dervish and Sufi orders were banned in modern Turkey. The Shems Tabrīzī order, by taking the name of Shams and pursuing antinomian practices, possibly drew attention to Shams' own practices and eccentric views—which were probably the reasons he was twice sent into exile.

Was it the intention of the Qalandarīs, in shaving their beards, to distance themselves from the Sufis and conservative Muslims? Wearing a beard has always been considered in accordance with the prophetic tradition observed by Muslim holy men and Sufis. The Qalandarīs, however, considered beards to be ceremonial and therefore dispensable; they considered the Islamic tradition to be spiritually redundant and stagnant.[16] In sympathizing with those Qalandarīs who shaved their beards, Rumi is said to have shaved his own beard enough so that the difference between man and woman could not be distinguished,[17] and he composed a deftly sarcastic verse directed against those pious people preoccupied with their beards, while portraying those without them (Qalandarī) as less distracted from attaining wisdom: "While the Sufi was busy combing his beard, the dervish had already reached the Truth."[18] Hāfiz (d. 1389) also wrote about the Qalandarīs, claiming that the shaving practice was only a façade, whereas the internal conviction behind it was much deeper:

> A thousand points finer than a hair are here;
> Not that anyone who shaves his head knows the path of Qalandarīs.

Because of their rebellious, antinomian attitude toward Islam and Sufism, the Qalandarīs were gradually ostracized and their later generations went into decay. Perhaps influenced by the Śaiva cult in India,

they ended up smoking hashish, some even wearing the skins of tigers, leopards, and lions,[19] and practicing other eccentricities such as using iron bracelets and rings around their genitals.[20] Eventually they were displaced by fresher and more creative groups of ascetics. The mutation in the Qalandarī group gave rise next to an austere community of dervishes, known as Jalālīyya, as the Qalandarīs disappeared.[21]

The Qalandarīs became active in Iran after the waning of their Malāmatī forerunners. Irāqī (d. 1289), for example, a great poet from Hamadan, shaved his head and beard, joined the Qalandarīs, and traveled to India (Delhi and Multan).[22] The antinomian position of Qalandarī culture in Iran and the Near East was not uncommon, but they were always in the shadow of Islamic culture and Sufism. The Qalandarīs became known as the wandering, unmarried, individualist ascetics who practiced detectible social and religious renunciation.

The appearance of Shams and his attitude of utter renunciation and position vis-à-vis Islam and Sufism can be understood only in the context of his historical period. A great number of unruly ascetics like Shams eased their position within Islamic societies by adopting Mohammad as their role model and even choosing to face the *Ka'ba* for their meditation.[23] But various antinomian practices and un-Islamic utterances continued, despite the threats against, and even execution of, several prominent mystics and philosophers by the political and religious authorities for heresy between the years 750 and 1250. The unconventional practices of these eccentric non-Sufis were so confusing that the conformist Sufis saw no alternative but to try to bring them all under the same Islamic umbrella. Their position had to be justified by comparing and aligning them with the prophetic model and qualifying them with some Koranic verses, in order to appease the opposition aligned against these so-called non-Sufis—a technique used throughout their history.[24] This is how both Shams and Rumi were brought under a conventional Sufi and Islamic umbrella.

In direct opposition to the Islamic beliefs against drinking wine and committing adultery, these wanderers (*rind*) practiced wine drinking and were even known to visit brothels (*kharābāt*) or smoke hashish,[25] actions deemed unacceptable and incomprehensible to the Muslim Sufis. The wine-drinking and tavern visits, therefore, had to be rationalized by interpreting them as cunning metaphors, and later ascetics capitalized on this technique. Shams did not make an effort to hide these practices, as we shall see later.

These transgressive practices eventually made their way into the Persian poetical imagery of the Qalandarīs in the form of *ghazal*s, such as those by Sanā'ī (d. 1131).[26] After some time in Sarakhs, in northeastern Iran, Sanā'ī settled in Ghazni, where he walked barefoot, practiced austerity, and often avoided the general public. The Qalandarī underworld, with little or no connection to religion, gradually infiltrated the greater world of Persian literature through poetry by giants such as 'Attār (d. ca. 1220), Irāqī (d. 1289), Sa'dī (d. 1291), and Hāfiz (d. 1389).[27] The Qalandarī "irreligious" spiritual culture thus established a more durable and elevated place for itself in society.[28] Wine drinking, Love, and rejection of religion became the characteristics of Qalandarīs in the works of poets and mystics such as Ahmad Ghazzālī (d. 1126), 'Ayn al-Quzzāt Hamadānī (d. 1131), Khāqānī (d. 1199), and Sanā'ī.[29] Presumably it is because of Sanā'ī and 'Attār's Qalandarī background (not necessarily their style of poetry) that Rumi declares that he is a follower of their footsteps.

Given his lifestyle and views when he arrived in Konya in 1244, it is not difficult to imagine Shams as a Qalandarī, a celibate wanderer in his sixties who was not shy about expressing his feelings about drinking wine, rejecting Muslims for their discriminatory and hypocritical attitudes, and speaking of Love as the ultimate state of consciousness. It must be borne in mind that a Qalandar's personal appearance would depend on his individual stage of evolution, ranging from the outwardly provocative wearing of animal skins or earrings, to those whose quality of mind was their only testimony to their advanced level and eccentricity. As we shall see, Shams can be assumed to be one of the latter.

But whether Shams was a Qalandar or not, the practices attributed to him were revived by the grandson of Rumi, 'Arif Çelebi, one of the proponents of the Mevlevi and Shems Tabrīzī orders, who bent the social and religious rules of Ottoman dervish orders by openly drinking wine.[30] This practice was fostered by other members of the Shems Tabrīzī order who also shaved all their facial hair.[31] From this angle, the opposition to Shams by Rumi's disciples and conservative Sufis may be traced to Shams' arrival in Konya, most probably beardless with a shaved head, and perhaps even wearing an earring. If the future adherents of the Shems Tabrīzī order under 'Arif Çelebi pursued antinomian practices, then Shams must have created a foundation for it.

If Shams did have a Qalandarī background, then Rumi would actually be a direct carrier of antinomian culture. In any case, Shams was a rebellious thinker, whose meeting with Rumi consolidated the power

of his reform message and infiltrated it through Rumi's refined lyrical poetry, works admired by posterity.

SHAMS' PERSPECTIVE ON MOHAMMAD AND ISLAM

Shams' bending of all the rules included eschewing the history of Islam, especially the role of Mohammad. Many references in the *Maqālāt* show that Shams' focus was asceticism and the enlightenment that he believed that the prophets, including Mohammad and other saints, had been looking for. For Shams, enlightenment was the goal, while religion eventually became a political tool to control people, one that created deviation from the path to enlightenment and defeated the goal of a highly spiritual wayfarer. Such religious and domineering politics divided society into believers and non-believers, a division that in Shams' view would be fatal to spiritual harmony and prevent the attainment of the highest universal consciousness. To him, the highest spiritual matters were absolutely non-sectarian. This stance may have been the reason that his anti-establishment attitude extended to the Sufi orders whose masters established such dogmatic guidelines.

Shams went on to disentangle the spiritual and ascetic labor of the prophets from what eventually became a religious institution. (The prophets—as Shams, like other antinomian mystics, perceived them—had come in between the absolute truth and the spiritual seeker, and in fact could not convey the direct experience of the truth except by delivering their revelation.[32]) This was his external paradigm shift, which he would later introduce to Rumi. His internal paradigm shift was more profound, focused on removing the primacy of the body through dance and music so that a deep state—deeper than a dream—would emerge, a state that was timeless, unborn, undying, and untainted by superficial changes in the human physical body and the environment. He referred to this phenomenon as Love-consciousness. This spiritual experience and its anchoring knowledge could definitively do away with any religious or time-bound discriminatory attitudes towards one community or another. This perspective would ultimately shake Rumi to his core.

Shams was not interested in the pedantic topic of religion, and he was impatient with people who boasted about their knowledge of religious sciences or spiritual achievements. In his mind, the biblical prophets, including Mohammad, represented something other than what average people perceived. Shams perceived such prophets to be solely spiritual entities who trained their own minds.[33] The minute

they invited the masses to hear their wisdom, the division between people began and the truth was lost amid the ignorance of the masses: the masses were not spiritually trained to maintain devotion to the truth, Shams believed, because they based their knowledge of truth on belief in the spiritual experience of their prophets, and not on their own experience and understanding.

Faith in the legitimacy of their religion led religious people to shed blood and create a division between believers and non-believers. The confusion and discrepancy lay between what the prophets experienced spiritually and the obedience of the masses. Initially, the prophets and later their apostles followed the impulse to convert other people to something that was by definition non-transferable: a highly personal, mystical experience. The prophets, according to Shams, were misunderstood. They had come to act as mirrors for people, not saviors. They taught people to search for their own godly roots.[34] In the words of Shams, all the prophets were dervishes and ascetic seekers.[35] Although their searches were valid indications of their spiritual state, Shams did not feel he was personally obliged to idolize the prophets nor to imitate their subsequent religious formation. He had spent his life in search of training for his own mind, to understand a realm beyond the transitory events of the world without being entangled or confused by religious episodes, dogmas, or debates.

A closer look at Shams' *Maqālāt* reveals a number of authentic and fresh ideas, some of them unique. He separated Mohammad's spiritual experience from those who used Mohammad for their own religious enterprise yet called themselves Muslims. Shams usually presented the person of Mohammad (and other prophets) as a great dervish who immersed himself in the realm of Love;[36] he perceived Mohammad as a mystic, whose earliest ascetic practices saved him from the nastiness of the crowd and the world.[37] Shams often called those who had been following Mohammad *mohammadiāns*, as opposed to *muslims*, a claim not without basis.[38] Shams had trouble accepting the division of humanity into the community of believers (*mu'min*/Muslims) and unbelievers (*kāfir* or non-Muslims).

In Shams' critical understanding, the problem of the artificial division between believers and non-believers began the moment Mohammad began to preach; this was when misunderstanding surfaced.[39] Shams extrapolated that the status of Mohammad was greater when he meditated, a time spent in seclusion with God. The moment Mohammad began to preach, the commotion of division between his followers and the opposition began to unfold, and people asked for miracles. The split in the community created animosity and duality, belief and

disbelief. Had Mohammad not attempted to appeal to people, no one would have troubled him, and out of his spiritual circumstances further beneficial things could have happened.[40] Elsewhere, Shams said, "Mohammad's path (*motābe'at*) was when he went into *mi'rāj* [ascension, a state of *vajd*, or realization of Love]; [you] try what he tried; try to create a foundation in your own heart."[41] Later in his poetry, Rumi used the concept of *mi'rāj* to represent an ultimate level of Love-consciousness, one not necessarily representing the religious cliché.[42]

In addition, Shams believed the source of spiritual confusion stemmed from sociopolitical dualism and a false perception of "divine favoritism." In Shams' words, theologians such as Fakhr Rāzī, famous for his massive exegesis of the Koran, brought nothing but a nightmare of hypocrisy without knowing anything about the burning Love of the dervishes.[43] Shams vehemently berated them: "Where is the head of Islam and where the heart of Islam?"[44] The Sheikhs of Islam, to Shams, were like the "chewing mice who destroyed the house Mohammad tried to build."[45]

In his dialogues with Rumi, Shams expressed views indicating that he was a solitary man in pursuit of higher spiritual experiences, devoid of the obligation of blindly following Islam or even Mohammad. At one point he told Rumi, in order to initiate something between their living spirits rather than resort to religious textual sources, "Maulana [Rumi] I do not rebuff you, it is only I do not follow the religion of Mohammad. . . . Against this background I have become your follower [friend]; I would clearly not do otherwise."[46]

Before meeting Rumi, Shams had already explored some of these ideas through challenging discussions with the famous theosopher Ibn 'Arabi (d. 1240) in Damascus. Some of their discussions were focused on whether the self or Mohammad was responsible for people's spiritual attainment. Shams relates one conversation with Ibn 'Arabi: "[Ibn 'Arabi said] Mohammad is our guardian and the holder of the veil. I [Shams] said, 'Why don't you see in yourself what you see in Mohammad? Everybody is the guardian and veil holder for himself.'" Rumi also composed a poem to this effect (D: 235).

In Shams' view, Ibn 'Arabi was hiding his cleverness, and was in fact not a follower of the path of Mohammad anyway.[47] As much as Shams praised Mohammad as being dearly loved,[48] and believed that what Mohammad did was splendid for himself, Shams felt that other practitioners would have to develop their own book, personality, and path. As a result, Shams' words were, occasionally, almost heretical, such as when he once daringly said: "The treatise (*resāleh*)

of Mohammad the Messenger of God has no benefit for me; I must produce my own treatise. Should I read a thousand more treatises I would become even duller."[49] Reading more books, in Shams' words, was like "loading a donkey with books."[50] In the world of masters such as Shams, the science of the mind requires neither books nor scholastic learning.

Shams had almost completely extricated Mohammad from the Islamic empire that the Muslims had later created: Mohammad and Islam seem to have become for him two separate entities. To cover up for their un-Islamic comments, both Shams' and Rumi's utterances were geared in defense of *Mohammad*, not—as they are often misconstrued—in defense of the *Islam* of the caliphs with their armies and theologians. Although the prophet and the religion seem to be inseparable to many, dervishes such as Shams brought disarray to the understanding of history and a jolt to the sense of what constitutes a genuine spiritual experience on a direct personal level, as opposed to vicarious experiences mediated through saints and prophets.

Shams depicted Mohammad as an ascetic, unschooled and even anti-scholastic. In one anecdote, Shams said, "One day, Omar, the companion of the Prophet, was reading a chapter of Torah. Mohammad grabbed the book from Omar's hand and said, 'He whom Torah was revealed to [Moses] would have followed me had he been alive today.'"[51] This anecdote could be interpreted in at least two ways, including from an Islamic point of view, that Mohammad was the seal of all prophets and Torah was then outdated, or from an independent, spiritual point of view, that the path to spiritual enlightenment required neither books nor organized religion.

So Mohammad's spiritual achievement (which Shams and Rumi allegorically called "the light of Mohammad") was great, but Mohammad's dead body would not bring any spiritual gains for Shams, other than perhaps in setting an example of a passionate spiritual quest. Even while he was a model for Shams, Mohammad never awakened his mind by dancing to music, the way Shams did. Nevertheless it is highly possible that Shams, and similar rebellious personalities, paid lip service to the Islamic authorities, defending Mohammad or hiding behind his name, simply to be able to live in the Islamic societies and pursue transgressive practices that fell outside of religious norms.

Clash with the Establishment

Shams did not hold back from criticizing famous mystics such as Bāyazīd and Hallāj for their egocentric utterances (e.g., "I am the

Truth"). Their use of the pronoun "I" was, in Shams' view, a violation of the dervishes' code of conduct that sought to reduce the focus on one's individual self.[52]

In Shams' view, as well as Rumi's in the years to follow, Islamic scholasticism and theological schools obscured a deeper appreciation of Love, the only common denominator for humanity and all of existence.[53] (Rumi makes references to the pedantic theologians who neglected Love: "Abu Hanīfa did not learn about Love. Even in Shāfei there is no mention of it." D: 499). In order to rid oneself from the dogmatic dualism of "I am believer, you are non-believer," Shams suggested that one should make serious sacrifices to reinvent oneself before being sacrificed to religious divisions.[54]

Maintaining respect for religion was not a problem for Shams, but he believed that being entangled by it, as theologians and many Sufis of the time were, created spiritual obstacles. He metaphorically explained that the destination of enlightenment is more important than the bridge that leads to it. The bridge should not be the object of veneration. With the destination being enlightenment, the bridge symbolizes the religious establishment. "I have never been concerned about the bridge; my concern has always been to have my mule to cross that bridge. There are great philosophers and adepts; what do I do with them? I am on the lookout for a hungry soul, a thirsty one with unpretentious qualities who searches for pure water."[55]

The paradigm shift that Shams described was a sensitive, and even life-threatening, idea that demanded extra caution. Shams can be assumed to have taught Rumi shrewdness and secrecy in order to avoid falling prey to the hands of religious fanatics. The brilliant illuminationist philosopher Shahāb al-Din Suhravardī (d. 1191), who lived shortly before Shams, had confronted religion and its powerful establishment and been murdered by an Ayubid mob at the age of 36. This tragic outcome was, in Shams' assessment, a classic example of being careless. "That [Suhravardī] stepped outside of Islam and targeted Mohammad was the cause of his death (*tark-e motābe'at kard, Mohammadash kosht*)."[56] Shams did not wish this to happen to him or to Rumi. Despite his mastery of wordplay and his masquerading technique of hiding his critical views, Shams was careful to articulate his ideas only in closed circles, such as Rumi's. Yet in public he left little or no trace of evidence to convict him as an apostate (although he did create suspicion through his lifestyle, antinomian practices, and the way he may have dressed and shaved). To oppose Islamic dogma would have had serious consequences for which neither Shams nor Rumi wished or was prepared. Rumi, however, was quite aware of the

danger that anti-religious articulation would cost lives; he told his son Sultan Valad of the killing of Hallāj and persecution of Bāyazīd for their ecstatic articulations.[57]

Having exercised all necessary caution in public (using a permissible *kitmān*, or denial, against accusation of any heretical beliefs), within Rumi's trusted circle Shams did not hesitate to express his most honest views regarding religious scholasticism versus the essentials of a mystical experience. It is remarkable that what he revealed was recorded (*Maqālāt*), yet was kept away from the public eye until the twentieth century.

> I [Shams] was told that I should write an exegesis of the Koran. I said, "My exegesis will look like something you may guess. It is neither about Mohammad nor about God. Even this 'I' here will have to negate I . . . to an extent that my own ego would be confounded with my reasoning. In the same way, a calligrapher used to write three kinds of inscriptions: one kind that he could read but others could not, one kind that both he and others could read, and a third kind of inscription which could be read neither by the calligrapher nor by others—that [third kind of inscription] is me who speaks here; neither I nor others outside of me know the true me."[58]

Because of this reasoning, Shams' believed that the exegeses of the Koran by various authors reported about their own state of understanding, not about the Koran itself.[59] An exegesis, whether crafted by Muslims or apostates, is only worthy if it will result in devotion.[60] It is the depth of consciousness that matters to the experience, not the intellectual production. According to Shams:

> In the secrets of the inner self, all the suns, moons, and stars maintain their serene place. Only illusion perceives them as created; once the Friend (*yār*) [Love] emerges from the inner world, all the illusions are shattered open and then the whole of existence becomes manifested . . . the remedy of my infirmity comes from him [Love]. Only in negation of self and selfhood is he perceptible.[61]

Elsewhere, Shams placed the Koran in a highly respected position, but considered its content to be for the masses, instructing and inhibiting them from doing things, showing them their place in the world. However, he considered it to hold a different meaning for special, attuned people.[62] (This sounded very much like the "double truth" of the two Andalusian polymaths, Ibn Tufayl (d. 1185) and Ibn Rushd (d. 1198), which was picked up by the scholastics.[63]) Even contrary to

the popular belief that the prophets serve an external purpose, should the need for the prophets arise, Moses, Jesus, Abraham, Noah, and Adam all are to be found inside oneself.[64] Shams points to the potential for attaining human perfection by attaining prophetic knowledge (*insān al-kāmil*).[65]

ATTITUDE TOWARDS MUSLIMS AND *KĀFIR* (NON-BELIEVERS)

Throughout the *Maqālāt* it is clear that Shams did not think highly of the Muslim masses.[66] Referring to the herd mentality of religious people, Shams said, "Imagine those who have remained imbecilic and in utter disarray, and have no idea of what is being said to them."[67]

Shams understood the word *muslim* to mean not just a follower of Mohammad, but a person whose inner world was honest and egoless and who was in the state of *submission* regardless of his religion. By this definition, Shams felt that a devout and pure Christian was a truer *muslim* than a Muslim who was only Muslim by name or birth, and not by action and devotion.[68] In his poetry, Rumi's use of the term *muslim* parallels this broader definition. Shams said at one point that it is absurd to content oneself with ending up as Muslim; there is much more in life.

In his chronicling, Shams brought up a subtle but important point about war and peace in the later community of the faithful, from the perspective of the men who became the first two caliphs of Islam after Mohammad: "The Prophet once asked his companions," Shams reported, "who is interested in peace and who in war? Who prefers reconciliation and who the splitting up [from the pagans]? Would your tendency towards peace originate from [the desperation of] loving oneself and confusion in the heart, or would it come from wishing the best for people with your patience and wisdom?" Shams wrote further about Mohammad's observation that Abu Bakr was not a man of the sword—he was a man of forgiveness, and would appear to deal with situations in calm and reconciliation—while Mohammad saw in Omar a man who could kill his own son for an adulterous act, and who would not hesitate to kill his own father for disregarding the Prophet, all under the banner of righteousness.[69] Shams did not elaborate on his depiction of Abu Bakr as being close to Mohammad while also representing spiritual values, as opposed to Omar, who represented the legalistic and warrior side of religion. But Shams was clearly suspicious

about the state of Muslim affairs and Muslims' claims of inner peace and submission:

> What is the pleasure in being Muslim? In disbelief (*kufr*) there is more delight. From a Muslim you'll find no sign or path to being Muslim [submission]; from an apostate (*molhid*) one finds a path to being Muslim [submission].[70]

The true follower of Mohammad is he with "broken heart," like a dervish, and those who followed him later were "broken bodies" of warriors, since they could not distinguish between the danger of proselyting (*da'wat*) and the grace of sitting in seclusion (*khalwat*).[71] Shams was convinced that the truth cannot be understood through the power of the sword, nor through the manipulation of words in subjective and biased religious interpretations. In avoiding the theologians of the *madrasa* and the Sufis' fraternity lodges, or *khānāqāh*, he preferred "dialogue with the apostates because it is peaceful, so that they appreciate my apostasy."[72] Convinced by his experience, he often deemed the non-believers' beliefs more truthful than those ascribed to Muslims.

> There are those negligible individuals hidden from sight who have completed the journey of life but have remained without fame . . . [in fact] the difference between me and the famous ones is that my inner and outer states are indistinguishable.[73]

Shams did not hold back from attacking religious fanaticism. He could not agree with the religious view that human failure in Islam was the fault of the devil. Shams believed that the devil was only a threat to theologians, not to a dervish whose consciousness hovered in another reality out of the devil's reach.[74] Shams sometimes unambiguously made provocative statements: "Bliss is found in my disbelief (*zindaqa*) and in my sacrilege (*ilhād*); there is not much delight in my believing in Islam."[75] The validity of his rebellious attitudes towards fanaticism and what he considered to be theological absurdities seems to be buttressed by the very words of the theologians themselves, whose writings and preaching brought about social discrimination and the illusions of heaven and hell. The famous sage and poet Sa'dī (d. 1291) displayed a similar attitude and made similar social criticisms, showing no interest in traditional legalistic theology, instead casting "numerous dervishes (*darviš*), pious men (*pārsā*, '*ābed*), and ascetics (*zāhed*) in the role of protagonist in the *Golestān* [a Persian prose work completed in 1258]."[76]

Shams' antipathy to Muslims' dogmatic follower mentality is obvious in his discourses. But his opposition was aimed more at humanizing their views of non-Muslims and demonstrating the nature of Love, which is the engine of life in everyone, beyond religion and faith. With this in mind, it is not odd that both Shams and Rumi repeatedly referred to the *Kaʿba* and its ceremonial rites as an artificial practice; the real pilgrimage would entail meeting the Beloved lying in the heart, rather than walking in the desert on the long physical journey to Mecca.[77] Shams could not have imagined that one day Rumi would turn his consciousness into the '*Kaʿba*' and make it the direction for all devotional practices.[78]

Along those lines, Shams and Rumi honored Moses, Jesus, and Mohammad for their inner spiritual journeys. These ascetics' spiritual endeavors to find a path to Love were ground-breaking for their communities, but as they became known as prophets, posterity took their oral teachings in an unbending legalistic direction under the banner of God and His prophets. On closer examination, both Shams and Rumi tried to hold Mohammad as a spiritual seeker in a different light, a man who in his long solitude tried to reach the height of Love.

Shams' understanding of Islam and legalistic religion was that people just spent their time on rites and rituals. His views on the *Kaʿba* could only be expressed behind closed doors under Rumi's protection. Shams certainly did express his opinions behind closed doors; Rumi later articulated them while taking great poetic license. Shams recounted that one day during evening prayers, he and a group of people performed prayers led by the Imam. During this time, Shams noticed that they were all standing with their backs toward Mecca, as none were performing true prayer ritual and none cared about facing the *Kaʿba*.[79] He noticed that Muslims boast about their anti-idolatry religion while being hypocritical:

> Mohammadans (*mohammadiān*) claim to be such and such; Mohammad is such and such. So you [a Muslim] condemn the stone worshippers who stand in the direction of a stone with their carvings on it; well, then you also stand facing a wall as well. . . . Try to understand this: the *Kaʿba* lies inside the world and the people around the world face the *Kaʿba*. If we removed the *Kaʿba* from the middle, we would witness all the people around the [imaginary] circle are prostrating to each other. He prostrates to her heart and she prostrates to his heart.[80]

To Shams, the heart was the seat of the impersonal god, namely Love. Shams also refuted the interpretation of the prophetic *hadīth*, that "the love of the homeland was part of your faith." Shams and Rumi both ridiculed people who believed that by "homeland"

Mohammad meant Mecca, when in fact the true homeland of the follower of the path of Love was the realm of God.[81] Shams objected to empty surrender to such rituals because he believed that enlightenment was the work of the *heart*, not the *forehead* (the Muslim prostration is on the forehead).

> My heart is not a lodging for anybody but the truth. If you have not yet seized the truth, what is the purpose of prostration then?[82]

Shams' convoluted articulation of religious concepts was one of his tactics for disarming the fanatics. From the Islamic point of view, disbelief in God (*kufr*) stood opposite from belief (*imān*), and the two could not be brought close together. Here Shams reversed the notion of disbelief by giving it a divine attribute (self-projecting) or, rather, separating it from dualistic thinking:

> Disbelief (*kufr*) is an attribute (*sifat*) that comes from God. If anyone knows what *kufr* is then he has attained union and thus he is no longer a disbeliever . . . the believer must send thanks that he is not a disbeliever and the disbeliever must send thanks that he does not live in duality.[83]

The judgmental approach to religion, praising one community and condemning another, is a product of history and fluid human circumstances; Shams defied the transient claims of belief and disbelief amid the long and tumultuous history of humanity.[84] To Rumi this was no small matter; he went on to compose hundreds of verses emphasizing and re-emphasizing that the spiritual journey is neither entangled with belief and disbelief nor dependent on simple faith (see chapter 5B).

Shams' preference for an unbeliever friend over a believer was explained in this way: the believer shows affinity only toward a fellow believer. Together they invite people to their creed, while their brotherhood remains precarious and dependent mostly on their common religious interests. But having an unbeliever as a friend means the friend would never try to proselytize, and would not maintain friendship out of religious affinity.[85] Some Islamic sheikhs expressed the opinion that there had always been a wide rift between belief and disbelief among the masses, prompting Shams to declare the mind of such a sheikh to be a hundred years behind that of a sound and sane person, and that such sheikhs would always hide themselves from dervishes.[86] Aware of his own directness, Shams cautioned people that anyone who associated with him would either lose their belief system,

or find their existing belief strengthened. Furthermore, conscious of his appearance and religious failings, Shams preemptively announced that, because of these factors, the depth of his discourse would naturally be misunderstood.[87]

Shams sharply deconstructed clichéd religious protocols. For example, his mentions of the practices of visiting brothels (*kharābāt*), drinking wine, and other nonconformist behavior are reminders of Qalandarī conduct.

> Let us go to *kharābāt* and see those desolate people . . . whether they are good or bad we shall observe. Let us go to the [Christian] church to observe. No one seems to tolerate my views. What I do may not be appropriate for an imitator and may not be [blindly] followed.[88]

Whether Shams truly consumed wine or not, he was not shy about discussing it. In an odd yet purposeful manner, he invited an old friend and ascetic master, Owhad Kirmānī, to have wine. Shams related that after performing the sacred dance (*samā'*) and dialogues, Owhad asked him, "What would it take to keep you [Shams] in my company?" In response, Shams set a condition for Owhad: "to drink wine in the presence of his disciples while I would abstain from wine and would only sit and observe." Owhad asked him, "Why wouldn't you drink?" Shams said, "So that you would become an intoxicated enlightened one while I'd remain spoiled and un-intoxicated." Owhad said, "I cannot do that." Then Shams whispered something (he did not reveal what) into his ear that made Owhad hit his forehead with the palm of his hand three times (signifying a shock or that he should have known better).[89] It turned out that Rumi was able to endure Shams' mind-shattering tests and demands.[90] It was Rumi's flexible attitude that rewarded him with the understanding of the many fine angles of Shams' consciousness.

Shams himself was of the opinion that a dervish would need a wine that he could contain, not a wine that would contain him and throw him on the ground. To him this was what would be unusual; otherwise, getting drunk was a common practice.[91] There may have been a secret mental exercise involved with this practice of drinking wine, so that a dervish could contain the wine and not vice versa—something perhaps practiced at spiritual feasts and in closed esoteric circles.

On the subject of wine, however, Shams spoke of its health benefits in the *Maqālāt*: "Meat, wine, and honey dew (*kharbozeh*) are beneficial for a healthy body; these improve health, unless there is an illness; then they make it worse. Because of this a sick person is advised to

avoid meat."[92] Other than wine, Aflaki refers to a crowd who were speaking of the harm of hashish where Shams responded; "our friends are lifted by [smoking green stuff] hashish" (*yārān mā be sabzak ǧarm mishavand*). It is added that the Koran does not specifically forbid hashish.[93]From this context, however, it is not clear whether Shams smoked hashish, even though some Qalandar dervishes did.

On the subject of dance, *samā'*, Shams is assumed to be the prime architect and choreographer of what later was followed by the Mevlevi whirling order. There is no evidence that Rumi, before meeting Shams, ever showed any interest in dancing, clapping his hands, or stamping on the floor in the tradition of certain mystics of the time. In fact, as a theologian of the time he may even have taken a position against it. It may have been because of the way Shams appeared and turned Rumi's understanding of things upside down that Rumi realized the power of dance. It may take some time to fully grasp that one's understanding of the inner self is inhibited by the body, but through dance the centrality of the body is removed, and such understanding can be freed (similar to yoga, in which union is the purpose). Shams believed that by way of dance one can reach one's own god.[94] Here Shams eloquently illuminates the beauty of dance:

> The dance (*raqs*) of the men of god is graceful and effortless. It is like a leaf on flowing water. Inside, it is like a mountain (*kuh*) and even a hundred thousand mountains, but outside like straw (*kāh*).[95]

His Social Psychology

Shams was a dervish whose physical appearance was insignificant but whose social critique was the work of an accomplished thinker. Shams understood people's mental makeup, and his analyses comprised various aspects of society, providing numerous criticisms and insights. Never reticent, Shams ridiculed the positions of philosophers and theologians. Even Sufis did not escape his ridicule, especially when they showed a feverish passion to search for God:

> Knowing God is deep?! You fool, what is deep is you. If there is anything deep, it is you . . . what kind of human are you who has no idea about the secrets of your own mind?[96]

He rebuked those contenting themselves with being just Sufis. He exhorted them to strive beyond being a Sufi or Gnostic, telling them

to aim even higher than the sky above.[97] Shams also pondered if philosophers were wasting their time in speculating whether the world is eternal or created[98] (a similar position is taken by Rumi, discussed in chapter 5B). He believed that the task should be to make meaning out of one's own limited life within the complexity of the world.

Shams had a metaphor for the physical world: "The world is a treasure guarded by a snake. One group of people in the world play with the treasure, another group with the snake!"[99] Those who in this world focus on the nonessentials (*far'*) and let the essentials (*asl*) slip away because of their ill-preparedness are left without either the nonessential or the essential. In fact, those who strongly believe their definition of "essential" always remains the same will be disappointed if one day their "essential" becomes nonessential. The non-prioritized and naïve sense of judgment about essentials and nonessentials creates confusion and obstacles to people's highest purpose in life.[100]

But there were also those whom Shams wished well, although he knew he could not have a meaningful exchange with them. He seemed to have intuitive clarity about what people believed and how they pursued their habits. His mixed feelings towards society were reflected in the *Maqālāt*:

> There are times I pass by friends and never greet them, not with ill-intention. I must say this: "They do not know what I think of them, only if they knew how I wish them bliss, purity of heart, and attainment of Love, then they would give their life for me. I never think bad. . . . Never devil has been allowed to my heart."

Nevertheless, Shams was convinced that transparency with the public in general would give them a reason to accuse him: "Should one be honest with them, one would be driven out of the city to the desert."[101] Being aware of how convoluted people's characters could be, Shams believed it would be more challenging to know people than to know the absolute truth.[102] However, his astute mind could penetrate the minds of those who would utter a few words; to him these words were the means to assess their character on a deeper level.[103]

As a prelude to the discussion of Love, Shams had to demonstrate and analyze the limitation of the intellect—on which logicians base all their understanding of the world. He maintained that the intellect or rationality (*'aql*) was acquired by humans in the course of physical evolution; it was not preexisting. The intellect, to him, was weak and could not comprehend the realm (*haram*) of essentials (presumably the pre-evolutionary stage).[104] The intellect has aided the exploration of the frontiers of

absolute reality, but its misuse has led to contradictory conclusions, and out of it have come the seventy-two warring nations.[105] The intellect, in Shams' view, theorizes about worldly affairs and is capable of employing many treacherous techniques that seduce the human understanding, but it cannot experience the ultimate, the unthinkable. (Rumi also shared this view.) Manipulative discourses only injure the ears of the hearers. He said that the intellect used for this world is expressed through the lips, while the intellect of the other realm is speech that is like an arrow launched from within.[106] In his intuitive search to locate the root of human essence and his own liberation, Shams gave neither intellectual assumptions nor celestial powers any credibility (nor does Rumi).[107]

To Shams, the eternal secret of existence lies deep in the human heart, not in books.[108] Shams made this point—which from the Islamic perspective is inflammatory—clearer with his description of living experience, as opposed to "lifeless" ink on pages: "I would not bow to the Koran which contains the words of God, but I would bow to the words coming out of Mohammad's mouth."[109] The experience and knowledge that Shams was interested in remained outside the confines of books.

With his consciousness of timelessness, rejecting linearity, Shams said that if "the beginning of time" is called the head, and "eternity" the tail, they are nothing but arbitrary designations. The permanent light of the sun knows no east or west:

> What is the meaning of the beginning and eternity? A Sun has arisen with a light that has covered the whole Universe. What is even the meaning of the sun? And in the midst of this [light], why are the masses standing in darkness? Do they not know anything about this [light]?[110]

The way Shams understood the path to enlightenment was beyond linear time and outside of the dualism of religion; beyond the conversion from pagan practice to belief in God and to Islam. Each time, humans have produced something different in their history. Despite all their failings, Shams saw human effort in history in a positive light, as a search for perfection.[111]

> Fluctuation is not in the absolute, it is within you. (*Maqālāt*, 204)

Love as the Main Premise

The debate over the experience of the consciousness of Love became the precursor of a silent rebellion against the stagnant state of

spirituality in Konya. Rumi was quite familiar with the idea of Love from the Sufi literature and from the poetry of Sanā'ī and 'Attar, but held an apparently superficial understanding until Shams broadened the horizon, going on to create a new deity out of Love, the primordial and immortal force of life. To grasp the crux of how Shams perceived and experienced Love, it behooves us to examine it the way Shams presented it in his *Maqālāt*. This should also make evident what Rumi meant by Love in his poetry, an approach that discloses Shams' and Rumi's intertwined consciousness, an inseparable reality.

The goal of existence and the human struggle to bear the confusing pain of existence (*dard*) has been to discover something deeper in life than preoccupation with food, shelter, fame, and scholasticism. In the world of Shams, the source behind all mortal things is something that will never die. This immortal source lives in the human heart, in every person and every generation, without preference for a pious person over others. This immortal source of existence has been called Love *('Ishq)*. This life-giving Love resides in its pure form in the inner human world.

This Love has been interpreted by various authors to be the same as the God of the scriptures.[112] But there are several problems with this conceptualization. The God of the scriptures is the Creator of the entire universe; meanwhile, Muslim jurists have often suspected antinomian mystics of uttering the Supreme is identical to their individual selves. Moreover, the God of scriptures in His glory is not "designed" for being identical to a mystic. Furthermore, God would prefer obedient worshippers, because He would punish the disobedient. In the discourse of Shams, and consequently in that of Rumi, Love is not to be dogmatically venerated and does not discriminate between believers and disbelievers in its role of providing equal life force of life to all people, regardless of their culture, race, or belief system. For Shams and Rumi, the goal of living in this world thus became a religiously non-ritualistic and non-legalistic journey simply to discover one's own source of existence: Love, a non-punishing and non-judging phenomenon. Perhaps out of reverence for Love, some non-Sufis, including Shams, took on the libertine attitude that they should not be bound by legal and theological Islam.

The knowledge of eternally living Love is to be realized in one's heart. Accessing its experience would render something within a human being immortal, even though the physical body dies, something that does not fall prey to the changes of the evolutionary process. For Shams, Love pulsates outside of time; its timeless nature has no recognition of yesterday, today, or tomorrow. And yet it behaves within time.[113] Immortal

and untainted Love is an ancient archetype of existence, which in the course of evolution (as Rumi refers to it) finds an abode in the human system, in the symbolic seat of the heart. To attain the true and immortal state of existence, one must merge the heart with Love through spiritual discipline, visualization, meditation, dance, and ascetic practices. The knowledge of this undying Love in one's heart simultaneously means the discovery of the true source of permanent existence, a realm on which Shams and Rumi wagered their lives to attain.

The nature of Love is to make life possible in every moment and every generation, from time immemorial, without preference for one group over another. Generations have come and gone; multiple gods with different attributes have arisen to glorify the power of this immortal force. The ageless Religion of Love (*Mazhab-e 'Ishq*) as it is called by Rumi, is intended to connect with this source, which lives alongside the human faculty, in order to attain immortality.

The God of Islam is the powerful Creator and final decision-maker about all manner of reward and punishment, determining who is good and who is a sinner. On the margins of this dominant belief, a "newer" god (Love), who would not discriminate or promise reward and punishment between the faithful and the pagan, between a Muslim and a Christian, or even between a good person and a bad person, had to be brought into the closed circle of the mystics, without causing too much of a clash with the greater God of religion. The subjects of Love and God will be further discussed separately in chapter 5A.

This understanding of Love changed the matter dialectically, socially, and even religiously. The notion that Love does not discriminate based on religion led Shams to relate an anecdote recounted by Bāyazīd, who had compared different human skulls in order to demonstrate non-discriminatory Love and the ultimate equality of human beings. No sign of their faith, race, or actions was apparent on their skulls.[114]

Shams seized the opportunity to understand Love as the source of existence for the whole universe, even though its physical appearance differs from one thing to another. This invisible Love, as a ubiquitous force of life in the physical universe, Shams found, takes a contracted form in the human body. Shams draws our attention to human existence as the reflection of a greater existence in which Love is a common denominator: "This [visible] Universe is a reflection of the human body, and the human body is a source of understanding of another realm."[115]

Shams perceived the world as a house to shelter our physical body, to allow us to search for the treasure of Love hidden in the background.

To know and recognize the veiled Love required no scholastic learning, no theology, and in fact no words or sounds—Love can only be grasped, in Shams' words, in utter silence (*khāmoush*).[116] It is therefore not surprising that Rumi, later in the poetry of his *Divan,* teaches the power of silence in understanding the phenomenon of Love; he even used *khāmoush* (along with the name *Shams Tabrizi*) as a nom de plume in his lyrical poems. Shams (and Rumi) did not avoid using words to describe the indescribable Love, but they cautioned that the words must have an unmistakable function and be used judiciously. As Shams put it, the words were nothing but arrows, and the bow to release these arrows was Love. Once the arrows hit their target, they must return to their quiver where they belong; otherwise, what use do these arrows (words) have?[117] Rumi uses the bow-and-arrow metaphor similarly: "In hunting the heartless my hundred senses set the trap, but from the bow of Love a hundred thousand arrows were released."[118] The worlds of *words* and *silence* each had their proper function in bringing Love out of obscuration.

Intellectual words would at the same time, however, obscure the contemplative understanding of Love. For Shams, the preponderance of dull philosophical and exegetical writings was meaningless if through them the realm of Love could not be realized in human consciousness. It is very characteristic of Shams to express his disdain toward exaggeration and clever scholasticism: "The dust rising from the dirty shoes of a true practitioner of Love is more valuable than the entire circle of scholars of the world put together."[119]

Even worse for Shams was when he had to deal with people whose fanatical ideas were far from the consciousness of Love. He avoided such ignorant people, never cared about their compliments, and cared even less about their thorny sarcasm. He even refused to eat the food of ignorant people, claiming that their food cannot be easily swallowed. It was impossible for him to share his ideas with such people, because he believed they were not representing their true selves, instead allowing a treacherous self to dominate their mindless affairs.[120] On the other hand, despite such people's inauthenticity, Shams still considered them to be part of humanity. In his discourses, he quoted Rumi, alluding to the metaphor of people as individual grapes; once the essence of these grapes was squeezed out in a bowl, their individuality would simply disappear. In this instance, one can only assume that Shams meant "Love" as the "essence" of all individualities; he emphasized, "He who understands this has attained the ultimate stage (*kārash tamām ast*)."[121] In Rumi's words, "Those numbers in grapes, become extinct in the extract squeezed from them."[122] With

this understanding in mind, both men left no room for dualism and multiplicity, nor for good and evil, in perceiving Love. Love is equally and simultaneously present in a knowledgeable person as well as an ignorant one; in the body of a believer as well as a disbeliever—in a Rumian sense, all these individuals symbolize different young trees of a single, vast, variegated forest that should not be uprooted.

Love thus became the central theme of discussion between Shams and Rumi for the three and a half years they spent together. Love also became a metaphor for God, for immortality, for final destination, for union, for the permanent source of existence and fountain of mystery—the "Religion of Love," as Rumi puts it.[123] The nature and didactic understanding of the Love Shams had presented brought with it rebellious and philosophical implications that revolutionized Rumi's personal life as well as his understanding of existence, both of which had to be measured against religious and social contracts. This potent theme remained inside Shams until he met Rumi. Throughout his spiritually mature years, Shams searched for a guide (*sheikh*) of his own kind, one who could grasp whatever was inside him.[124] Actually, what mattered to Shams was one single profound friend with whom he could uninhibitedly share his state of consciousness, a consciousness much like a particle searching for its source to be absorbed and be merged with. In his early sixties, he finally found Rumi, whose friendship triggered the vibration and absorption with Shams' consciousness—exactly like the absorption of the two "particles of the same Love" attracted to a greater magnet of life. Together they revived an old teaching that god lives inside us and gave it an innocuous and non-controversial name: the "Religion of Love." They revived the search for an immortal consciousness through the power of dance and contemplation rather than pedantic religiosity. The revelation of this undying and enigmatic Love in his life touched Rumi to such an extent that his illumined mind began to see Love everywhere—and in every human being, no matter to which religion they adhered, whether sinner or pious, no matter from what corner of the world—a Love that is pervasive in the power of Rumi's poetry, thanks to Shams and to his own awakening.

Shams' Success

Rumi surrendered himself to the experiences of Shams because he believed in Shams' sincerity and in the power of his paradigm. Shams may have appeared as a blunt man in the eyes of the public, but in him Rumi found a highly sophisticated and advanced mind. Shams

had experienced the secret of existence in his own heart. The physical shape of the world appeared to him as a distraction, disguising the prototype of its immortal essence. Having recognized the immortal essence or Love, which existed before humanity, Shams could no longer live through his physical body alone. His mystical transformation was irreversible, and his understanding of immortal Love became his tool for living the rest of his life. Seemingly, because he had attained the knowledge of this metahistorical essence of existence, he was no longer bound by the events that had shaped history, including religious events and declarations. The transformation of self, especially the kind of self that Shams had in mind, annoyed the Sufis and theologians of the time, but his teachings attracted at least one solitary follower: Rumi.

Chapter 4

Rumi Unlearns His Pious Past: Curbing Anachronism

The Meeting

Rumi's meeting with Shams propelled him into a new level of understanding. Legend has it that Shams, under the discipleship of a certain Baba[1] Kamāl Jandī[2] (or Jundi), was advised to rush to Konya specifically to prevent the vibrant young Rumi from falling into a spiritual abyss: "to reignite the dying fire."[3] Whether or not this anecdotal claim is a later construction, Shams not only reignited but also reinvented Rumi.

Rumi was thirty-seven years old when his prior learning was superseded and his old conceptions of religion and mysticism came to an unexpected end with Shams' arrival in Konya sometime in March[4] of 1244. It may not have been the first time they met. According to Shams, they had met in Damascus sixteen years earlier, perhaps when Rumi was studying there.[5] But the time had not been ripe for their full partnership to bloom. Later, when they met again in Konya in 1244, it is said that Shams recited for Rumi a poem by Sanā'ī (d. 1131), a poet whom Rumi admired and had often discussed with his former mentor, Burhān al-Din Tirmidhī.[6] This particular poem seemed to be the blade that Shams used to uproot Rumi's antiquated scholastic intellectual learning: "If a body of knowledge cannot set you free from yourself, then ignorance is a hundred times better than this knowledge."[7] This was a direct assault on Rumi's accumulated pedantic knowledge, and on Rumi himself as a bearer of what his father and those before him had espoused. Rumi metaphorically confesses: "Had

it not been for the tide of Love of Shams the truth of Tabriz, I wonder who would have saved me from the bottom of the sea." (D: 2784)

Their encounter in the year 1244 led Rumi and Shams to embark upon a spiritual journey together. Shams considered Rumi's scholarship to be unparalleled. Even in a hundred years, Shams claimed, he could not obtain one-tenth of what Rumi had acquired. But despite his own extensive knowledge, Rumi had knelt before Shams like a "two-year-old child at the feet of his father, or as if he were a new convert."[8] Shams had never before experienced such confidence and courage in the conservative Islamic communities he had traveled through. Even more unexpected was how Rumi, despite being a reputable scholar and theologian, went so far as to abandon his own theological school. Because of this, despite the social obstacles he faced in Konya, Shams was impressed and agreed to stay in Rumi's company and teach him everything he knew.

Meanwhile, Rumi ensured their protected solitude so that he could grasp Shams' teachings. Rumi was enthralled by having discovered something deep in himself through the jolt of Shams but was careful to keep it secret. Between 1244 and 1247, it seems no one besides Salāh al-Din and Sultan Valad had knowledge of what Shams shared with Rumi.[9] The importance of this was obvious to Rumi; once, asked to define a mystic, he replied, "It is he to whom you tell your secret and he remains silent; such a man is Salāh al-Din."[10]

Nevertheless, amid dissent against Shams and Rumi's bond by Rumi's disciples, and because of Shams' peculiar and unwelcomed behavior, Shams was forced to leave Konya. But Rumi continued on the path of rebellion, shifting into a new paradigm, and gradually into a bodiless consciousness that he called *shams*. It was the spiritual preparedness of Rumi and the charisma of Shams that brought about one of the most consequential interactions of guru and disciple in the history of the East. In this chapter and the next two, we will take a new approach to viewing Rumi's startling transformation and the world philosophy represented in his poetry.

UNTYING THE KNOT

Lack of information about all the specifics of the interactions and exchanges between Shams and Rumi during the first six critical months[11] and the three years that followed has allowed others to mythologize the story of Shams and Rumi. The only means to demythologize what Shams and Rumi shared in solitude are Rumi's poetry, Shams' *Maqālāt,* and circumstantial evidence. Future research based

on these sources can be expected to undo the uncritical and unverifiable claims of the early biographers and some later authors.

Until now, the biographical information and the biographers' guesses have followed two paths. The first was to declare Rumi's connection with the evolution of the Mevlevi Sufi order, claiming that Rumi himself was the founder of the order. It must be borne in mind that this anachronistic connection of Rumi to the Mevlevi order was a by-product of Ottoman dervish culture, which itself was shaped under the conservative Islamic culture of the Ottomans. There is no concrete evidence that this claim is accurate; it seems to be the work of posterity. Rumi was not in favor of creating a Sufi order; later mystics named the order after his title, *Mevlānā* (respected leader) or *Mevlevi* (the Turkish pronunciation of the Persian *Maulānā* or *Molavi*—spiritual and religious master—used to refer to Rumi). Had he founded an order, he would have ended up with a sectarian crowd of devotees again, which was the situation before he met Shams.

Other commonly held beliefs follow the path set by the earliest biographies of Rumi, the first by Fereydoun Sepahsalar, who wrote his *Resāleh Sepahsālār* shortly after Rumi's death, and the next by Shams al-Din Ahmed al-Aflaki (al-'Arefi), who wrote almost seven decades after Rumi's death. Both were disciples of the newly established Mevlevi order in the early fourteenth century and were linked to the formative years of the order after Rumi's death. Aflaki is believed to have essentially copied Sepahsalar's earlier biography of Rumi and then inserted his own detailed information about the Mevlevi order and its later leaders. Although he drew upon various sources available to him, including Rumi's poetry and Shams' *Maqālāt*[12] as well as Sultan Valad's volume of poetry, *Ebtidā Nāmeh*,[13] it seems he could not resist romanticizing the story. Unlike Sepahsalar, Aflaki apparently did not shy away from biased exaggerations[14] and unrealistic rumors (such as Shams' alleged murder[15] among others)—especially about his own spiritual guide, 'Arif Çelebi, Rumi's grandson[16]—in telling the story of Shams and Rumi.[17] Aflaki's religious tendencies (at least those implied in his book *Menāqib al-'Ārefīn*) are those of a legitimate, romantic, and licensed Ottoman author.

These rumors and exaggerations have partly obscured the Shams-Rumi story. Rumi's biographers may have intentionally covered up Shams' non-Sufi origin or even his non-religious statements,[18] which are scattered throughout his *Maqālāt*. Instead Shams has been attributed magical and metaphysical powers (*kerāmāt*). In fairness, Sepahsalar's very short biography did include some of Rumi's and even Sultan Valad's poetry, but it contained nothing from the *Maqālāt*.

This is surprising because it is evident that Sepahsalar was no outsider to either Rumi's circle or the newly established Mevlevi order. Either Sepahsalar did not have access to the *Maqālāt,* or he ignored its content for the sake of the Islamic reputation of the newly established order. It is possible, however, that the *Maqālāt* was kept secret by Sultan Valad, handed down only to his son 'Arif Çelebi and the line of later dervishes in closed and trusted circles.

As the years passed, Rumi was careful not to reveal anything about Shams to his former disciples since, out of jealousy and suspicion over the changes they had seen in Rumi, they were ready to pounce on any inflammatory statement as grounds for chasing Shams out of Konya and perhaps even killing him. Rumi was unsure about openly sharing views with those he called *harīfān* (opponents), who could reject them on religious grounds. He wished not to implicate himself in the strident heretical positions that Shams had begun to be accused of. Rumi made himself unemployed and free from all official and religious engagements. By doing this he also freed himself from any compulsion to share any of Shams' views with former students.

The fact remains that no one could claim to know precisely what had occurred and been discussed between the two men. There was only the closed circle, as mentioned before, whose members became tightly involved in the relationship between Shams and Rumi and who shared nothing with anyone else. However, some references to Shams and Rumi's relationship remain in the poetry of Sultan Valad, which will be considered below.

LOVE: THE BEGINNING AND THE ENDLESS

In Rumi's *Divan* it becomes clear that the central topic that the two men engaged in dialogue about, as was discussed in the previous chapter, was *Love* (*'Ishq*). The incredible one-to-one transference of spiritual understanding between Shams and Rumi was made possible by the open and non-hierarchical setting of a brotherhood. Through this intense interaction, Rumi discovered a pure and precognitive consciousness that was undifferentiated, immutable, in the center of everything, outside of time, and beyond the impact of historical events, uninvolved with the historical religious shifts—beyond all the arbitrary notions of belief or disbelief in God. The unchanging nature of Love is the reality behind all the phenomena. Rumi was able to irreversibly penetrate this undefinable realm of permanent existence, which both he and Shams called Love.

In the *Maqālāt* and Rumi's *Divan*, the experience of multiplicity and change is described as the work of sensory deception. It is through knowledge and the experience of non-self (or non-ego) (*fanā* or *bī-khwīshī*) that finite sensory experiences manifest their illusory nature, while Love, the "real observer," is the unchanging permanence. This awareness was central to viewing the world. The union with immortal Love, in order to become immortal, was only a metaphor; in a psychological and poetical sense, the beauty of immortality was the experience of it in the mortal body. Love thus became the new "god" that Rumi expounds upon in his poetry. The profound dimensions of this Love are found in many different metaphors in the *Divan*.

This much Rumi reveals about what he had learned from Shams. Otherwise, the content of the conversations and practices between Shams and Rumi, except for dance and music, remained hidden from the public. The *Maqālāt* provides more details of the interactions between the two men and gives a critical glimpse at what Shams taught Rumi about Love. Even more significant, it also reveals some of the new paradigms that Shams discussed with Rumi that remained unspoken of, especially the irrelevance of dualism to religious discourse.

Dance and Music—*Samā'* as an Instrument of Awakening and Social Upheaval

The real experience of the Love-consciousness learned from Shams would not be completely realized without dance and meditation. Ultimately, however, music and dance (*samā'*) became the only visible manifestation that Rumi would share from Shams' teachings—and some sort of *samā'* was also practiced by other mystical circles in the eastern Iranian world. Other than the topic of Love, Sepahsalar reveals that some of the earliest conversations between Shams and Rumi were about the dance and its effect as well as other unrevealed themes.[19] One particular choreographed dance was introduced to Rumi as a type of "yoga," used to experience the non-self by removing the centrality of the body and conventional consciousness. The end effect of the movements was to liberate something deeper each time until the nucleus of Love was attained. Thus, through dance, the mortal mind-body met the immortal Love hidden deep in the human heart.

Rumi practiced the whirling dance and even went on, as has been purported, to perform it in public.[20] For years he did nothing but dance and play music. Sultan Valad in his poetry tells us that his father had previously been very busy with religious matters, and practiced

austerity, until Shams appeared and got him involved with a "dance which became his new religion" (*shod samāʿash mazhab-e oo*), and that from his *samāʿ*, "a hundred gardens grew in his heart."[21] Sultan Valad compared Shams with Khidr, the hidden and ever-living prophet who was commissioned to guide Moses (whom Sultan Valad compared with Rumi), the lost prophet who needed a profound spiritual tutorship.[22]

In later years, despite the condemnation of dance by Islamic jurists of Konya, Rumi continued the enterprise and occupied himself with composing poetry, even at the cost of destabilizing worship and creating moral suspicion.[23] Sultan Valad in his own *Masnavi* of *Ebtidā Nāmeh* writes that in those later years, his father would pay gold and silver to the musicians to play and chant for him so that he could dance without interruption. The extent of the dance was such that, as Valad reports, the musicians were not even permitted to sleep or take breaks without pay, since musicians' voices could no longer perform. Moreover, a commotion came over the city when a number of people, having observed that the great master Rumi had turned away from legalistic religion, did the same (*ze sharʿ o dīn gashtand*). They moved away from belief (*Islam*) and disbelief (*kufr*), immersed themselves in dance, venerated Love, and designated Shams as their honorable master.[24] The social upheaval took new directions. It was not until after Rumi's death that an eccentric group (Shems Tebrizi) coalesced, considering themselves the followers of Shams Tabrizi. They were clean-shaven and barefoot; they drank wine, played music, danced, chanted, and disregarded *shariʿa*; and they claimed that the sun (*shams*) was the symbol for the true self.[25]

Having left a profound impact on Rumi and on the people who came into contact with Rumi's teachings, the vigorous Shams disappeared from Konya a little over three years after his appearance. But his dance and discourses survived.

THE SEED OF SILENT REBELLION

Dance and music were the external signs of a new worldview in high gear, and beyond them, the *Maqālāt* and Rumi's composition of lyrical poems were produced later, although the *Maqālāt* and to a certain extent the content of the *Divan* were kept hidden from the general public. Always cautious, Rumi referred to the "Secrets of Shams" in a way that indicated he alone knew what those secrets

were. In the years after Shams departed, Rumi would sit with Husām al-Din, dictating and retelling some of these secrets, but after Husām al-Din read back the dictation notes, Rumi would throw them in the oven page by page and burn them, saying that these secrets came from the hidden world and should go back to the hidden.[26] Shams himself had in several instances warned against revealing what he had discussed with Rumi.[27] But, seemingly aware that his message would get out, Shams prophesied, "My discourse would reach people whom I want it to reach, even though it may take one thousand years."[28]

The rebellion planted by Shams and carried forward by Rumi and his small entourage was directed at reforming two large areas. The first was to liberate Muslims and non-Muslims from discrimination and violent persecution fueled by religious and sectarian dogmas. Independent spirituality and its egalitarianism was the goal; everyone was responsible for his or her own insight without depending on other masters' spiritual achievement. Not surprisingly, Rumi attracted the attention of religious minorities in his lifetime and even more after his death,[29] and up to the present, since his attitude validated them in ways that they had not experienced otherwise. Thus his message has remained outside any religious traditions.

The second area of rebellion was an internal paradigm shift from a tribal, cultural, and personal god to an inner non-dual and impersonal god, the universal Love. This Love that Rumi explored with Shams has remained unchanging, unexplainable, unthinkable, and immortal; it is one and the same for all humans and other beings throughout the ages, without discrimination or the punishing rules imposed in the name of personal gods (such as the Semitic and Islamic God). Shams' Qalandarī iconoclasm was smoothed out by Rumi when Rumi took on the matter and presented this non-religious universalism using poetic license.

> Not until the time when all madrasas and minarets are destroyed
> Will the road of Qalandarī deeds be paved.
> Not until belief becomes disbelief, and disbelief, belief,
> Will a single person of the truth become in reality a Muslim. (D: r, 611)[30]

Both men's messages are available, unchanged after seven centuries, in the written documents they left behind. But their teachings were veiled under Mevlevi Sufi and religious interpretations, subject to many contradictions. Given the content of Rumi's *Divan*, some of

the claims by the religious interpreters of the Shams-Rumi discourses cannot be tenable.

IS RUMI MISLABELED AND MISMEASURED?

Īn sabab-hā bar nazar-hā pardeh-hast
ke na har dīdār san'ash rā sezāst
Dīdeh-yee bāyad sabab sorākh kon
Tā hojb rā bar kanad az bīkh o bon. (M: V: 897)

The chain of cause and effect has veiled the clear sights;
because of this, not all that it sees is valid.
An insightful eye must make a hole in cause and effect,
so that the veils can be purged from their roots.

After his experiences with Shams, Rumi developed doubts about religious history and dogma and decided to change his mind-set and all his practices. It may seem easy to label Rumi a transformed Sufi, and a continuation of the old tradition, but in fact such a claim in retrospect demonstrates that Rumi suddenly abandoned his ancestral theological and mystical practices. Whether what he had previously adhered to was from the Central Asian Kubravi order or other Sufi orders that both his father and Rumi's first mentor, Burhān al-Din Tirmidhī, introduced to him, cannot be confirmed.[31] Some even claim that Burhān al-Din was a follower of the Kubravi Sufi order, but the evidence is unclear.[32] Nevertheless, Burhān al-Din's goal for the nine years he spent with Rumi was for Rumi to attain his father's legacy.[33]

Rumi interrupted his earlier Sufi practices and theological formation when confronted with a new set of views, including the dance and music that Shams presented to him. Rumi stepped out of conventional scholasticism-Sufism, while Shams was never a Sufi in the first place. Anti-Sufi or even un-Islamic positions were not unusual (even before the arrival of Shams); there have been multiple such individuals or disguised sects in the Islamic world.[34]

The anachronistic and spurious labeling of Rumi as a Mevlevi Sufi arose partly because the order's members desperately clung to his name after his death, perhaps to shield the order from demise under the new Islamic Emirate/Sultanate of the Ottomans (established ca. 1299, twenty-six years after Rumi's death). Meanwhile, a number of mystical orders were emerging in Anatolia. Among these, the early Bektāshī order—with their antinomian, almost Qalandarī practices and appearance, by wearing an earring in the right earlobe[35]—became the strongest, and may even have inspired the formation and

polarization of the Mevlevi and Shems Tebrizi orders; the similarities between the Bektāshī and Shems Tebrizi/Mevlevi orders' practices were overlooked, especially the whirling dances, the tall hats, the shaving of facial hair, and the hierarchical ranking of their members.

The urge to form a religiously legitimate Sufi order is understandable and to a degree explicable, considering the historical context: in 1258 the Mongols had overthrown the 'Abbasid Islamic Caliphate in Baghdad. The Ottomans craved to re-creating the Islamic leadership and would not hesitate to persecute anyone they perceived to be outside of Islam. In such a political atmosphere, giving something an Islamized Sufi title was more innocuous than coming into conflict with the new religious rulers. The Ottomanized Mevlevis had a greater chance of survival than any group diverging from Islam (the same could be claimed for the Sufi orders under the Islamic/Shi'a-based Safavid dynasty in Iran, in power 1501–1722). The Shems Tebrizi order managed to continue its unconventional practices, probably because their numbers were small and they remained in the shadow of the greater Mevlevi order, keeping hidden from the eyes of the religious authorities.

As perhaps an unexpected outcome of the Mevlevi strategy, as the centuries passed, the Ottoman sultans and viziers grew fascinated and became involved with the Mevlevi order, developing more respect for their sheikhs than for the *muftis* (theologians), particularly in the nineteenth century.[36] (This was not necessarily the case for the Bektāshīs, whose supreme leader sometimes had to be approved and ratified by the Sultan's government.[37]) The later intermarriage of certain Ottoman Sultans with the descendants of Sultan Valad brought a greater legitimacy to the Mevlevi order and perhaps even further Islamized it.

Nevertheless, at first Sultan Valad was the primary medium of transmission between the time of the rebellious Shams in Konya and the later rigid years under the Islamic rule of the Ottomans. Sultan Valad, who died in 1312, lived thirteen years after the Ottomans had emerged to power. He and his son 'Arif Çelebi were the bearers of the sensitive heritage that their father and grandfather Rumi, as well as Shams, had left behind. However, not only was a Sufi order erected around his memory and teachings, the myth of Rumi and his saintly power was constructed by 'Arif Çelebi's disciple Aflaki. Aflaki made the exaggerated claim that the reasons the Khwārazmiān and Il-Khānid dynasties fell were because Rumi's father, Baha al-Din, used his power against the former, while the latter was cursed for mistreating the Mevlevi dervishes.[38]

In order to grasp the crux of the new paradigm delivered by Rumi through his poetry, we should avoid associating the later Mevlevi and Shems Tebrizi Sufi orders with the earlier stages of the Shams-Rumi interactions and intentions. The evolution of the Shams-Rumi consciousness into a Sufi order during the Ottoman period must be evaluated against the later sociohistorical forces and not necessarily interpreted as something Shams and Rumi initiated. Shams was a solitary mendicant with no egoistic interest at all in forming a Sufi order; Rumi, under the advice of Shams, abandoned his own Sufi practices and the teachings inherited from his father[39] and Burhān al-Din.

Thus, the Mevlevi and Shems Tebrizi Sufi orders picked up momentum because of the political and religious circumstances of the time, especially because of the direct association of Sultan Valad, 'Arif Çelebi, and their successors. In fact, how the Mevlevi order became associated with the whirling dance, and even whether it immediately became a Sufi order after Husām al-Din and the leadership of Sultan Valad, as is claimed, is unknown, although there are hypotheses. "One part of the ritual *samā'* later became known as the *dawr-e waladī*, but the precise extent of Sulţān Valad's role in formalizing the Mawlawīya [Mevlevi] rites and institutions is unknown."[40] The political pressures imposed by the Ottomans seem to have left Sultan Valad with two unfeasible options. One was to carry on a solitary practice, as Shams and Rumi had. The other entailed establishing a completely new doctrine, outside of parochial Sufi conventionalities, and requiring some sort of political patronage[41] to guarantee the financial security of the emerging but not totally accepted and assimilated practitioners in Anatolia.[42] But neither of these options seemed viable in the long run.

Whatever Sultan Valad understood of the nature of his father's rebellion, he briefly attempted to continue it by sending out messengers to propagate it. "Authorized representatives were sent to numerous parts of Asia Minor and elsewhere to propagate and establish the brotherhood."[43] To pave the way for the expansion of Rumi's teachings, Sultan Valad composed more poetry similar to his father's. "Aware that many disciples had difficulty in understanding Rūmī's writings, he [Valad] re-interpreted them in simpler language. Walad's writing lacks intensity, fluency, or new ideas and modes of expression; but its simple didactic clarity is some compensation."[44] Sultan Valad's son 'Arif Celebi also traveled to various parts of Anatolia and made several trips to Western Iran (Tabriz and Sultāniya) during the Mongol Il-Khānid period to spread Rumi's message.[45] The neighboring Mongol rulers in Iran at the time of Sultan Valad were Buddhist, and perhaps Rumi's household imagined they would be tolerant and would provide the

needed patronage. Nevertheless, the Islamic sociopolitical current of the day took Shams and Rumi's original "non-dogmatic-Sufi" and even innovatively universal message in the direction of Mevlevi Sufism in Anatolia for the next seven hundred years. The external Islamization and even Ottomanization of the later Mevlevi practices served to legitimize them in the eyes of the newly established Ottoman emirs, who had just filled the gap in Islamic authority left by the fall of Baghdad in 1258.

The other historical reason Rumi has been erroneously classified as a typical "Sufi" by so many authors has partly to do with a clumsy hagiographical method, wherein anything generally considered mystical in the Islamic world was indiscriminately labeled "Sufi"—a method followed throughout the last thousand years, either because of lack of a better term or simply out of religious habit and cleverness. This erroneous and intentional method was introduced after the eleventh century by the shrewd Sufi and hagiographer Abdul Rahman Sulamī (d. 1020). Sulamī labeled any mystical tendencies, even unrelated to Islamic culture, as Sufi[46]—a practice imitated by other hagiographers such as Qushayrī (d. 1072), Hujwīrī (d. 1077), and even 'Attar (d. ca. 1220).

Although the past seven centuries of "Sufization" of Shams and Rumi may not be reversible, the modern interpretation of Rumi as the architect of the Mevlevi order, and the historical post-construction of Shams and Rumi as Sufis, should be regarded as historically flawed.

A Myriad of Sufisms: Which One for Rumi?

Referring to Rumi as a "Mevlevi Sufi" is unarguably anachronistic. The question remains whether such a sectarian label, or even a generic label of "Sufi," was what saved Rumi's image (as well as that of the eccentric Shams) in the tumultuous social history of the Islamic societies.

The term "Sufi," from an undetermined Arabic-Persian (or perhaps Greek) origin,[47] refers to a group of ascetics who surfaced in Iraqi regions in the late seventh century, early in the Islamic period. The Sufi concept of being annihilated in the power of the Supreme or being united with God has a parallel within Gnosticism.

By the third century, there were three Gnostic movements in Iraq: Mithraism, Manichaeism, and neo-Platonism.[48] The Gnostics maintained an image of a world composed of light and darkness on both a cosmic and a human level. On the human level, the particle of light, the soul, is trapped in an evil body, the human body, an image that

may have been derived from Mithraistic sources[49] and that was then passed on to Manichaeism. In the eleventh century, Birunī alluded to the Sufi practice of uniting with the First Cause (God).[50] Thus, the presence of already formed and powerful orders in the Mesopotamian region such as Mithraism, Mandaeism, Manichaeism, and Christianity all contributed to the creative new movement that became known as Sufism.[51] The Christian concept of the figure of Jesus as the source of light merited a great deal of attention in Sufi poetry. The Mandaeans' gnostic influence on Sufi thought and poetry is exemplified by their shared concept of Adam as the first archetypal man who, through ignorance and temptation, was separated from the world of light, the home where meritorious descendants will eventually return.[52] At the same time, and for the next two centuries under Islamic rule in eastern Iranian and Central Asian regions, heterogeneous types of ascetics, mystics, and philosophers appeared. And yet the term "Sufi" was not applied to them—in fact, the people of those regions were not even familiar with the term until the ninth and tenth centuries, when Iraqi Sufis immigrated to those eastern lands.[53]

However, through the regrettable efforts of the Sufi hagiographer Sulamī, the Iraqi term "Sufi" became a generic label applied to heterogeneous individuals and groups without their choice or knowledge. One may argue that universalism was perhaps inherent within the flexible position of Sufism, so that everyone with similar experiences could be included as a Sufi, but this is not true. The presence of non-Sufis, or rather unconventional mystics in the Islamic world—including Shams and Rumi, and even Hāfiz—has been misrepresented or unrepresented by the scholastically oriented Sufis, theologians, and Islamic rulers who wished to gather all such people under the umbrella of Islam.

Rumi had nothing against the typical Sufis; in fact, in certain instances he praised them for their purity, dedicating various *ghazals* in the *Divan* to them (D: 186, 198, 396, 497, 1093, 1117) and providing symbolic anecdotes about them (M: II: 232–36, 245–48; III: 549; V: 1001–2, 1104; VI: 1088–90, 1095–1102), as well as criticizing them (M: II, 324–26, 387; D: r, 658) (without naming a particular order in his poetry). To Rumi, the Sufis—especially those he called *Sufiān-i ʿishq* (love Sufis) (D: 396)—came the closest to understanding and appreciating the egalitarianism of Shams and the experience of primordial and immortal Love, as opposed to ritualistic and legalistic religious Sufis—particularly those Sufis who appreciated non-discrimination and universalism (D: 3130). Rumi joined in calling himself, along with others, "*mā Sufiān*" ("we Sufis") (D: 858, 2229). But he called

himself all kinds of things, including "fire-worshipper" without being Zoroastrian (D: 2013, 2938) and "idol worshipper" (D: 852, 1569) without being an idol worshipper. Yet Rumi in his humanistic universalism does not exclude the nonconformist Qalandars and their virtues (D: 204, 607, 1125, 1336, 2173, 3005, 3119). More importantly, he inconspicuously inserts certain lines in his fifth *Masnavi* that he was a Sufi but has given it up irreversibly (*bāz nastānīm*) by putting down his Sufi cloak; through the relinquishing of it, dilemmas have been solved, hopelessness has turned into hope, and his mosque-like life has suddenly turned into an idol temple (*gasht īn masjid nāgahān īn botkadeh*) (M: V: 870).

Rumi's inclusive attitude, inviting everyone to see the wisdom of oneness in humanity, did not galvanize the conservative Sufis; they feared to enter his circle because it would require abandoning their conventional learning, especially when Rumi asserted the superiority of the Sufis over the scholars of jurisprudence.[54] Sufism comes the closest of existing philosophies to Rumi's position and views, but it discards the whole Shams-Rumi upheaval and leaves Rumi back where he was before meeting Shams. If his world views were influenced by Shams and his Qalandarī ideas, it would become obvious why Rumi openly composed poems against the hajj ritual and other religious rites and tenets. His stance on social non-dualism and non-discrimination vis-à-vis non-Muslims and other communities keeps him either on the margin or outside of religious and scholastic Sufism.

Rationale against Rumi's Labeling

In his poetry, Rumi defied encapsulation in an image he had rejected, or any labeling of himself at all, not once, but time and again. Rumi has been called an "Islamic mystic" because his cultural and ancestral roots were Muslim or mystic—a rather useful and easy way out of a more complex narrative. Should Jesus be identified as a "Jewish mystic" because he was born into a Jewish family? Should the Buddha be called a "Brahmanical/Hindu mystic" because he was born into a Hindu family? It would be just as absurd to call Jesus a Christian, or the Buddha a Buddhist. Rumi's mind, as reflected in his poetical teachings, did not belong to a limited geographical region or to a particular religion. As we can learn from his non-dualistic views of the world and the human family, Rumi's birth into a Muslim family did not confine his spirit to Islam. Instead, he discovered the spring of all life—Love.

The sectarian labeling of Rumi's teachings may have arisen from his later followers' fear that their teacher's teachings might melt away or be diluted in other teachings. The terms "Buddhist" and "Christian" were certainly applied by later followers, not the founders of such movements themselves. It is clear that Rumi left scholastic Sufism and his work as a Muslim jurist behind and preoccupied himself with dance, music, and writing down all the experiences emerging every day—without attempting to establish another fraternity—for the next thirty years, to the end of his life. But it must also be borne in mind that Shams was chased out of Konya after a short stay by Sufi disciples of Rumi, whether out of jealousy or religious opposition to Shams' defiance. If Shams were a Sufi or a pious man, he would not have been forced to leave for the second time, never to return—an indirect warning to Rumi himself.

Rumi had to continue his life in Konya among the dissenting theologians and the Sufis by remaining circumspect, avoiding belligerent behavior, and at the same time exercising ambiguity to keep things unrevealed. After Shams' departure, Rumi took an obscure position behind the goldsmith Salāh al-Din, as his guide, in order to avoid being held responsible for his suspicious disciples.[55] The disciples nevertheless found enough excuse for blame, as Sepahsalar chronicles, even accusing Salāh al-Din of being illiterate and ignorant.[56] Although Salāh al-Din's daughter married Sultan Valad, neither this family tie nor old friendships could stop the attacks on the small and secretive gatherings, dance, music, and anything else that the religiously oriented Sufis of the town found suspicious. The attacks put direct pressure on Rumi himself to surrender and return to his old order and religious duties.

Ten years went by like this until Salāh al-Din passed away in 1258. Salāh al-Din, as poeticized by Sultan Valad, wished musicians to be at his funeral so that people should cheerfully dance, so it would become known that the death of devout lovers is a feast to eternity.[57] Music and dance at a funeral attended by Muslims may not have been completely understood by or pleasing to the conservative personalities of Konya. After Salāh al-Din's death, Rumi used his new guide and companion, the young and highly literate Husām al-Din, to shield himself so that the retreat of dance, meditation, and music could go on without his former disciples or others Sufis demanding that he return and teach. It was once asked of Rumi, as Sultan Valad records, "Which of these companions/masters were better?" Rumi replied: "Shams was the sun, Salāh the moon, and Husām is the star."[58] While Rumi was busy whirling in his house and composing musical *ghazals*,

the wise Husām al-Din, now bearing the brunt of the social pressure of the community, proposed the writing of *Masnavi* (couplets) using religious themes in order to quiet the uproar and misgivings (as explained in book three of the *Masnavi*), and it did indeed bring some calm.[59] But the religious tension and criticism was equally experienced by Sultan Valad.[60] Even Rumi's elder son, 'Alā al-Din, a brutal religious bully, was a serious threat.[61] Because of his family connections and because he was not a wandering dervish like Shams, it was not practical for Rumi to leave Konya for an obscure rural area to pursue his practice. The music and composition of poetry gave him the spiritual space he needed in the midst of a belligerent and suspicious population.

There was much suspicion that Shams and perhaps Rumi, who were viewed as debasing the foundation of Islamic thinking, were apostates. Shams even referred to himself as an apostate (*molhid*) and non-believer (*kāfir*),[62] perhaps to stridently express his dissatisfaction with the masses being superficial Muslims or Sufis. Shams also saw it as the root cause of human tragedies that some people who claimed to be believers and actually weren't, and that followers of a particular religion oppressed those who refused to imitate them.[63] Rumi also did not hesitate to address this problem and to question the extensive destruction in the Islamic world (D: 202). He even believed the decadence of the world and religion could not be repaired without the intervention of a higher consciousness, which he called *Shams Tabrizi* (D: 1860).

By turning non-discriminatory and universalist, they planted a seed and went on to dance as a sign of social defiance. Sultan Valad was in a position to see some people turning to dance and moving away from belief and disbelief, as he describes in his poetry.[64] Thus, Husām al-Din's encouraging Rumi to compose his *Masnavi* could easily have been intended to prevent social backlash and protest against Rumi and his past dealings with Shams.

Masnavi: A Multifaceted Work of Scholarship, Not a Sufi Book

Rumi's poetical compositions are the didactic *Masnavi* and the lyrical *Divan*. Rumi admitted in *Fīhi mā fīh* that his composition (presumably referring to the *Masnavi*) was done out of fear of society, and he hoped that the crowds would busy themselves with it to save themselves from boredom; otherwise he despised such poetry.[65] The clever idea of the *Masnavi* provided food for every guest, as Rumi

metaphorically put it, but in its depth he captured the notion of Love in the disguised stories of others.[66] Elsewhere he says that his *Masnavi* is only a façade, for which the meaning is encoded in the message of non-dualism and unification of humankind (M: IV: 816). In five of the six books of the *Masnavi*—in the beginning of each of the last five books, particularly the fourth—it is strongly stated that the composition of the *Masnavi* was Husām al-Din's idea, and that he would decide its direction.[67] In the beginning of the fifth book of the *Masnavi*, Rumi reveals that the composition is a good one for the community of religious people, even though its true description is hidden and the secret of Love is held within. So the composition of the *Masnavi* can be viewed against the backdrop of Rumi's sudden seclusion, the opposition from his former disciples, and the need for "spiritual scholarship" from Rumi for them and for new young religious students who were just beginning the path (M: IV: 672, 674; VI: 1251–52).

> I would have told what needed to be told;
> If I did not fear to ruin how things stand. (D: 3147, see also M: VI: 1251)

> Regrettably it hasn't been revealed, I am afraid of revealing it,
> Because the blade of law is naked in his religious ruling (*shari'at*). (D: 2247)

The *Masnavi* is not organized thematically but, for Rumi, understanding is more important than organization. The narratives of the *Masnavi* follow conscientiousness rather than any sequence of thought. He depended on his intuitive reasoning to convey the message of the stories (see M: III: 609). In the long and pedantic description in his stories, he showed no concern for objectivity, preferring to make every story right according to his taste rather than objectively accurate. Although the *Masnavi* is unusual in telling more than two hundred stories in order to uplift the spiritual state of its readers, Rumi was not the first in his culture to use storytelling that way.[68]

In some ways, the *Masnavi* itself became another source for the misperception of Rumi as having returned to conventional religious Sufism. Because it is full of religious anecdotes, it has often been used to evaluate Rumi's philosophy within Islamic Sufism among traditional Sufis. The last classical Sufi poet writing in Persian, Jāmī (d. 1492), called Rumi's *Masnavi* the "*Koran* in Persian (Pahlavi)"—a stereotype theme propagated in the secondary sources.[69] The great poet Mohammad Iqbal from Lahore (d. 1938) made the same claim.

Modern scholars such as S. H. Nasr have suggested that the *Masnavi* is the Persian version of Ibn 'Arabi's *Futuhāt al-Makiyya* and follows his *wahdat ul-wujud* (the Oneness of Existence), though actually Rumi differed from this older contemporary.[70] Alessandro Bausani, out of his own religious bias, also took Rumi's *Masnavi* as the quintessence of religious and monotheistic thought.[71] In general, many such literati have in their own personal and spiritual lives favored Islamic and Sufi values. Their unyielding and persuasive claims have imposed upon Rumi the image of a scholastic or Islamic Sufi and ecstatic poet. But in Rumi's nameless and inclusive world, everyone has his or her reserved and respected place, be it a non-Muslim Indian, a Christian, a Sufi, a non-Sufi Muslim, a Jew, or an Ethiopian. The full scope of Rumi's own poetry provides its own counterevidence against the labels applied to him.

Misperceptions of the *Masnavi*

As much as Rumi's *Masnavi* has led to the religious label, his *Divan* has not. And the content of the *Divan* comprises who Rumi actually was, whereas his *Masnavi* comes closer to representing his spiritual scholarship under the supervision of Husām al-Din.

The perception of the *Masnavi* as Islamic, based on Jāmī's claim that it is "the Koran in Persian," is hasty and incomplete. It is true that the approximately 25,000 verses (50,000 lines) of the *Masnavi* include a mixture of Koranic stories[72] and approximately 740 prophetic *hadīths*. What was not detected by Jāmī and the later propagators of Jāmī's claim of *Masnavi* being "Koran in Persian" is that the *Masnavi* also contains around 60 Indian tales, including Buddhist tales,[73] as well as other ancient Persian tales (*Kelila va Dimna*[74]) and Greek anecdotes (some by Galen, Plato, and even Diogenes were also used in his *Divan*[75]). The treatise of Ikhwān as-Saffā is also mentioned in the *Masnavi*,[76] as well as certain tales about China,[77] alongside other popular preexisting mystical narratives.

Rumi certainly cannot be identified with or labeled according to the sources he used, whether Indian, Greek, or the Koran. He used whatever sources he needed to shed light from a literary angle on his central thesis, but his use of the Koran and the *hadīths* were pleasing to dutiful Muslims. The earliest references to Rumi's complicated and scattered philosophy, as Lewis observes, were by Indian scholars. Shebli No'māni published his work on Rumi's teachings in India in 1909, followed by Khalifa 'Abdulkarim, who in 1925 faced the difficulty of pinning down one system of philosophy for Rumi. He found

that Rumi's ideas included Semitic monotheism; Platonic, Peripatetic, Pythagorean, and Neoplatonic philosophy; as well as scholastic theology, Avicenna's epistemology,[78] Ghazzālī's prophetology, and Ibn 'Arabi's monism.[79] Of course, Rumi's avalanche of poems, stories, and imagery cannot outwardly lead to one single narrative. But Rumi prioritized his major goal, Love-consciousness, with everything else as subordinate (M: I: 94; III: 614)—a theme to be scrutinized and analyzed in the next chapter.

SOME EXAMPLES FROM THE *MASNAVI*

The *Masnavi*'s thick wall of words and stories creates an obstacle to immediately understanding its message. At times, the meaning and the poet's intention can become the casualties of his own technique. As we shall see in the next chapter, Rumi's poetry, particularly his *Divan,* has been interpreted either literally, or linearly without cross-references. The source of the words, whether from the Koran or from Indian and Greek sources, is not Rumi's point. Instead, the stories and words he uses often point to one single thing, to which he remained faithful—the philosophy of non-dualism and recurring Love (M: V: 877–78)—as well as other social and psychological themes. Evidence of this is abundant in the *Masnavi*, but it suffices to mention just a few examples here.

Rumi tells a story of a group of Christians who faced difficulties. At the end, he chides readers about religious conflict[80] and seals the story with a comment about the non-dualism of the world's essence and goal: "If you count a hundred apples and pears, after you squeeze them they will be one. . . . In the world of meaning, numbers are futile; the meaning does not contain numbers and individuals."[81]By this anecdote, Rumi rejects religious sectarianism.

On language and ethnic differences, Rumi says that a Hindu and a Turk, despite their language barriers, would get along better than would two Hindus or two Turks, if their hearts and their source of empathy are closer to each other.[82] Names and labels are but distractions and conventions; instead, those who penetrate the source of their primordial emptiness (*'adam*) are wise.[83] In one story, Rumi introduces Omar, the second caliph after Mohammad, as a symbolic dervish because of his modesty upon meeting the Roman envoy. He writes, "Omar says: 'Humankind is nothing but an insight wrapped in a skin; true insight is the same as friend (god or love). If one has no friend's insight then it's better to be blind.' Once the Roman messenger heard these words, he became more eager and began to perform dance (*samā'*)."[84]

In the story of a parrot who acted dead so that a merchant was tricked into freeing it, Rumi says that for spiritual liberation one would benefit from dying (to ego), like the parrot. This death needs a breath like that of Jesus to enliven us again.[85]

In the realm of dualities, there are conflicts that human beings ultimately relativize and justify.[86] According to Rumi, the war of Pharaoh and Moses happened because they were trapped in the world of dualities and colors; otherwise, in "colorlessness" there should be convergence and reconciliation.[87] Rumi continues to rise above duality with a story about a caliph: "To those who seem to worship idols: leave the image behind and seek enlightenment in the teaching. Accompany any pilgrim (*hājī*) who is close to you, be it an Indian (*hindu*), a Turk, or an Arab. Do not judge his profile or his skin color. Witness his intention and destination."[88] Mohammad and his uncle, Abu Jahl, who declared war on him, are described using the metaphor of the mirror as being one and true, the distortion arising from our own sense of duality: "Whatever the mirror shows in front of you, it is one's own beauty or ugliness."[89]

The story "King and Slave" in the *Masnavi* represents Rumi's consistent message: "How long will you want to be in love with the image? Seek meanings and find their significance. Know that the external image will be in ruins; only the world of meaning will remain. These shells and forms in the world are alive only through their non-physical source (*jān*)." (This is also a reminder to himself not to get involved with the external image of Shams.) All things will decay. No mountains, no planets, none of us will be around—only the non-dual god will remain.[90] Even in the *Masnavi*, Rumi would not neglect the power and metaphor of "Shams," the sun, which the central theme of *Divan* treats as being at the root of cause and effect, and yet at the same time being free from them all.[91]

The often-quoted story of "Moses and the Shepherd" signifies the refinement of Moses' coarseness and his lack of knowledge of pure Love; in this case, a shepherd's primitive expression for venerating God, despite his pure-hearted intention, was unacceptable to Moses. Even a prophet of his status misperceived the shepherd's monologue, believing it to be insufficiently sophisticated for God. Moses thought that this shepherd needed to be reminded about and corrected on how to tread the path of Love. Moses was chastised through a revelation that he had upset and separated the shepherd from his own imagined god. In the poem, through Rumi's reprimand, Moses learned that everyone should be left to his or her own path of spiritual growth without either being threatened with punishment from God for their

errors, nor promised a reward for their correctness. In this poem, Rumi brought a greater message of acceptance—not merely toleration,[92] in the Islamic sense that tolerated the presence of other religions but collected poll taxes from them. Instead, Rumi, in the same part of *Masnavi* advises: "Indians venerate the way it's done in India, Sindhis venerate the way it's done in Sindh. By saying their rosary and mantra it does not benefit me, it purifies their own spirits just as pearls become shiny. . . . The nation of lovers is distinct from all other religions, the lovers' creed and community is only god." In the poem, finally, after God reprimanded him, Moses understood. He reassured to the shepherd that he should express himself in his most intense way, even if it sounded like blasphemy. Moses said to the shepherd: "Your blasphemy (*kufr*) is itself religion, your true religion is the light of your consciousness."[93]

The story of Bāyazīd, the famous ninth-century ascetic sage, is another *Masnavi* tale that emphasizes the point of finding love and god in one's own heart, not in the holy House of God in the Arabian Desert. In the story, Bāyazīd was on his way to Mecca on pilgrimage to experience God when a wise man told Bāyazīd that if he would pay the expenses of the journey and circumambulate around the wise man himself seven times, the way he would around the *Ka'ba*, Bāyazid would save himself the trouble of the hard journey to Arabia. The man told Bāyazid: "'As you see me, you have seen god . . . homage to me is submission to god, so that you would not assume that I and the absolute truth are separate entities . . . Bāyazīd by this understood the significance of the *Ka'ba*."[94]

In the *Masnavi*, Rumi provided a more palatable language than in the *Divan*, making it easier for people to swallow his ideas by interpreting them in a way that was most comfortable for each one of them. With limited options as to the types of metaphors and acceptable literature available, Rumi exploited the Persian, mystical, and Arabic/Islamic literature that already permeated Konya and other parts of the Islamic world to capture his universal mystical and philosophical experience. His *Masnavi* thus represented a great epistemological task of synthesizing various traditions, while keeping his own deepest views safely in the background. The *Masnavi* was meant to open the eyes of the emerging generations, while also curbing suspicions against Rumi and repairing the relationships damaged when Shams was in Konya.

Rumi did not let his new mind stay hostage to his generation. His revelation of the *Masnavi* was not a revival of earlier Sufism or Islam. The practitioners of conventional Islam and Sufism, such as Rumi's

own father, had already established what needed to be established. Rumi's repetition of such an approach would have been superfluous, and Rumi took his work in a different direction from his father by opening the arena for a universal unity of humanity regardless of religious, ethnic, and linguistic differences. However, the use of Islamic literature in Rumi's *Masnavi* has misled many into erroneously perceiving him as yet another dutiful Muslim Sufi like his father and others.

Erroneously labeling Rumi as a scholastic Sufi because of the Koranic and prophetic stories, of course, fails to take into account his lyrical poetry in the *Divan*, in which he turns Shams into a new idol and into a bodiless consciousness, a theme that did not require the use of Islamic literature to develop. The poems in his *Divan* are all musical, as they are the culmination of a new mind-set outside of all conventions.

The *Divan*: The Non-Didactic Self

In the same sense that Bāyazīd experienced hajj not by journeying through the troubled desert but by a journey in the heart, Rumi encourages the search for the Supreme in the human heart and in every surrounding direction (D: 182, 200, 202, 617, 3103; M: III: 488). It is only in his *Divan* that Rumi releases more metaphorical hints on the issue of pilgrimage and the *Kaʿba*, presumably all learned from Shams.[95] Rumi shows in the *Divan* that the heart in which the pure consciousness of Love roams becomes the *Kaʿba* for those who have attained Love-consciousness. The "Shams consciousness" is the *Kaʿba*, worthy of prostration (D: 90, 107, 176). The *Kaʿba* [means *square* in Arabic, in this case square stone] is the idolized stone object (D: 332, 503).[96] The whirling dance is a symbol of circumambulation in Mecca (D: 339). Those who travel to Mecca on pilgrimage fail to view themselves as the veiled godly treasure, despite their search for and prostration to God. In fact, unbeknownst to most, the highly sought-after god sits in the human heart as our neighbor (D: 648). Rumi's defiance against externalized ritualism without the accompanying experience of the supreme consciousness challenged the pilgrimage and similar practices (M: V: 839). The *Kaʿba* is used quite frequently by Rumi, not in its Islamic sense, but as a symbolic indicator of the direction that one subliminally searches for to spiritually whirl around (D: 339, M: I: 164). Rumi sometimes uses the *Kaʿba* to represent an empty house made of mud and bricks, whereas the light

of one's own existence and heart is the true *Ka'ba* (D: 2204, 2827, 3103):

> O pilgrims of the hajj, where have you gone, where?
> The beloved is here, come, come.
> Your beloved is the next door neighbor;
> Why are you wandering in the desert, searching?
> If you see the faceless face of the beloved
> You are then transformed as the lord of the House and become *Ka'ba* (D: 648).

Similarly, in Konya at the gate of the Mevlevis' former sanctuary, where Rumi's tomb and museum now stand, is the inscription in Persian: "This sanctuary is the *Ka'ba* of lovers; he who comes here partial will leave this place full."

It was in the lyrical poems of the *Divan* that the true Rumi came out of his shell. However, its composition remained hidden in contrast to the *Masnavi,* which Rumi and Husām al-Din publicized and took pride in to satisfy the scholastic Sufis of Konya. It became widely known that the *Masnavi* took twelve years to complete, but the timing of the composition of the *Divan* is still not confirmed, as it was undertaken in secret and its content was not to be publicized. But it is believed that its main body was done during Rumi's ten years with Salāh al-Din, before his time with Husām al-Din.[97]

It is not difficult to see how different the elaborate and musical style of poetry in the *Divan* is from the "didactic" and "unmusical" style of the *Masnavi*, as if they are the works of two completely different authors, or the works of two distinct personalities.[98] In the view of the modern Iranian scholar Bāstānī Pārīzī, in the *Masnavi* it was as if Rumi was a religious orator who spoke to the masses in the language of religious anecdotes, whereas in his *Divan* he is an ecstatic lover who has lost himself in the fire of love. Reading and understanding the *Masnavi* demands intellect and interest, but to delve into the poems of the *Divan* is not for everyone,[99](by "everyone" it is meant that the words of the *Divan* may not be 'tolerated' by every religiously-minded person). To be sure, the rudimentary wording and roughness of the verses in the *Masnavi* can lead one to see it as being the work of Husām al-Din in the shadow of Rumi, while Rumi himself was engaged in the elegant composition of the *Divan*'s *ghazals.* (There is a hint of Rumi disowning his collaboration on the *Masnavi*, in that the final (sixth) book of the *Masnavi* is called *Husāmi Nāmeh*—the Book of Husām.)

Rumi labored spiritually for thirty years to find his proper place and stage in the profound world of spiritual and psychological experiences, while relinquishing religious belief and disbelief in favor of the oneness of the true reality of existence (see D: 2977). He was profoundly reminded by his guide, Shams, "Do not content yourself with being a theologian; say, 'I want more'—more than just being a Sufi, higher than mystic. Whatever is set before, you go higher, even higher than the sky."[100] Rumi could not identify his state of mind with any label, frequently referring to his circumstances as nameless. He could no longer say where he was from, geographically or temporally:

I am half from Turkistan, half from Firqaneh,
I am half water and clay and half heart and soul . . .
I do not distinguish myself from others,
I have lost my heart and limbs and reside in the wine tavern,
I have a chest full of stories, unsure whether I should tell them or not . . .
(D: 2308)

Even though I hide without telling it,
I am naked in the presence of glorious Love. (D: 1562)

I am so drunk and intoxicated
That I cannot tell the difference between Eve and Adam. (D: 1542)

I am blood, I am milk, I am infant, I am old,
I am servant, I am king, I am this and I am that. (D: 1466)

I am Turk sometimes, other times Indian (*hindu*), sometimes Roman and African (*zangi*):
O my life (*jān*) it is your signature whatever I confess or whatever I deny. (D: 1458)

Whether I know I am or I am not, I know one thing:
When I know I am, I am not, o life, but when I am not, I [truly] am. (D: 1419)

Do not search for me in this world or the other;
The two worlds have gotten lost in the world that I ponder. (D: 1759)

Rumi deconstructed his old self and all the labels that people tried to give him. Thus, strong skepticism and an unwrapped mind

in religion are required to read him accurately. The reinvention of Rumi by others as a scholastic Sufi was made possible by adapting him to the context of the historical period after his death, rather than actually interpreting his state of mind based on the content of his massive body of poetry, particularly in the *Divan* and that of Shams' *Maqālāt*. The de facto Sufi/Mevlevi narrative has been validated by scholarship simply because of the absence of any other analyses and claims.

* * *

A careful look at Rumi's life after his time with Shams shows his passage through three stages: *defiance* against the old order; *transmutation* from the old to a continually reinvented self by resorting to dance, music, learning to play certain instruments, and seclusion, without depending on hierarchical transmission;[101] and finally the phase of *compromise*.

"Compromise" in this context refers to a phase of Rumi's life in which he decided to move higher up in his inclusive innovation and his discourse of non-dualistic Love. He returned to including Muslims and Sufis as the community of God-believers alongside non-Muslims—including all the ethnic groups known to him from Africa, India, Greece, China, Rome—to promote an inclusive approach to all religious communities, from a non-dualistic standpoint, without favoring one over another. He realized that from a more transcendent position he could include all religions as well as the whole undivided community of humanity, whereas he knew that from an exclusively Islamic position he would have to exclude non-Muslims from being at the same level with Muslims. At the same time, he realized there was no harm in following the scriptures of one's own religion, but he envisioned that all eventually would have to reach the one single truth at the end. Despite his own stance favoring inner evolution, he defended Muslims' use of *shari'a* in spite of its dryness.[102] (D: 1207, M: I: 94) But to Rumi, rituals such as prayers (*namāz*) or the shedding of tears should not be used out of desperation because one needs something from the Supreme; true prayer is the process of leaving your body and mind behind (M: V: 883). It would have been unrealistic for Rumi to try to ignore 650 years of Mohammad's legacy, which was still strong in the Islamic lands, as he refers to it in the *Divan* (D: 491). As for Mohammad's standing as a man and as a spiritual leader, Rumi preferred his ascetic practice

in the cave, a companionship he longed for (D: 452). Because of Love, "I consider Mohammad a solitary man distinguished from other [biblical] prophets" (M: V: 954). Thus, he does not hesitate to acknowledge Mohammad's virtuous spirituality in contrast with that of Mohammad's uncles and foes, namely Abu Jahl and Abu Lahab (M: V: 880–81).

Meanwhile, Rumi was not shy about saying that religions followed their prophets, while the absolute truth is one, no matter what the source (M: I: 174). In his quest of direct experience, Rumi, like Shams, wondered why the prophets should be the veil between the seekers and the absolute truth (D: 235). His analogy for oneness of the truth extends to oneness of all people of the world: the color of sperm is the same (white) for a Roman and an Ethiopian and all the races of the world, and they have no labels while they are in the womb (M: I: 194–95). Although the ideas cleverly concealed in his poetry could have been challenged by theologians, especially regarding the equality of Muslims and non-believers, he kept the new paradigm in the back of his mind, allegorized in his poetry, and never succumbed to discrimination between people of the world.

From his writings and poetry it is clear that the usefulness of a dualistic worldview of belief or disbelief, good or evil, had lost all worth and attraction to Rumi, giving him an aura of being at odds with the established religion. He was now basing his social philosophy on non-dualism, and the idea of being a Muslim or a Christian or following any other religion meant one thing: a need for contemplative experience in the universal path of Love beyond the path to which one was born. He learned from Shams that being called a Muslim just because one believed in the person of Mohammad was not sufficient. Exoteric ritualism could not substitute for experiencing what Mohammad spiritually experienced, especially his *miʿrāj* (his mental ascension to the Divine Throne), or absorption in Love in Shams-Rumi's interpretation.

> Experience and ascend to *miʿrāj* like the messenger:
> Kiss the face of the moon as you are standing on the highest roof.
> (D: 638)

> In the utter darkness of the night like Mohammad, go and demand the wine of purity.
> From the nocturnal *miʿrāj*, the king became unique without a second.
> (D: 525)

Not that the person of Mohammad went into *miʿrāj* at night,
It was his radiating light that went into heaven. (D: 258)

From the inner ladder every breath goes into *miʿrāj* . . . (D: 477)
Love is a kind of *miʿrāj* toward the roof of royal beauty;
From the face of the lover surmise the tale of *miʿrāj*. (D: 133)

To Rumi, *miʿrāj* was a meditative understanding of the ultimate knowledge; it came from glimpsing the unchanging and undying face of Love (D: 980, 1321, 1602). Organized religion's conformism and the mass conversions to Islam achieved through wars of conquest held no proof of spirituality for Rumi, and obviously not for Shams either—in fact, the prophets, Rumi writes, did not pursue wars (M: IV: 658). The old paradigm of religious legalism and ritualism became obsolete for Shams and for Rumi,[103] but the lives of Mohammad, Jesus, and other prophets and saints stayed fresh and valid because of their individual and direct experiential nature.

It was the quest for the *experience* that sent Rumi through whirling dance, music, and secluded contemplation in order to comprehend the centrality of what Shams had brought to his attention. Previously, religious piety had been his spiritual tool, but his mastery of the inner experience slowly gave him the knowledge and language skills to articulate what that experience was. As he became more comfortable in his experience, he humbly perceived the religiosity of average people to be aimed at obtaining such direct experience, but often falling short because of empty ritualism and poisonous discrimination against other religious communities. Rumi, therefore, maturely and constructively chose a non-rejectionist path to include everyone in his universal discourse.

Rumi constantly reminded his readers of the non-dualistic realm of Love, free from good and evil or heaven and hell:

We have escaped the web of good and evil;
As for surrender to faith and sin, [it should be] done without us. (D: 128)

Should the fire of the heart arise,
It will burn the believers and the disbelievers . . . (D: 538)

Hell for the disbelievers, heaven for the believers,
Love for the lovers is meant for the extinction of our ego. (D: 52)

Being aware of belief and disbelief is heresy to [Love];

Whoever is aware of it is free from the attributes of the world. (D: 468)

I did not become a Muslim (*mu'min*) by declaration.
My spirit is the witness—I became a believer when I became a disbeliever. (D: 543)

The spring of belief, the dark dirt of disbelief,
So long as you have your flame alive, they both seem like straws. (D: 608)

Rumi went on to pour out the nature of his non-dualistic philosophy in the poetry of the massive *Divan*. Before we turn to his philosophical model in the next chapter, let us consider here Rumi's utterances (in prose) in *Fīhi mā fīh*,[104] in which he further describes the inner experience of formless and non-dual Love.

FĪHI MĀ FĪH: RUMI'S RECORDED UTTERANCES

Why did the curl of your hair trap one to become faithful and the other pagan?
Unless you wished for the Muslims, Christians and the pagans all fall for you.

Rumi's *Fīhi mā fīh* has in recent decades emerged from long obscurity after being ignored in the historical chronicles. It was most likely compiled by Sultan Valad.[105] A number of insights from these discourses are worth mentioning here.

Rumi articulates the absurdity of the most profound *inner* reflections and experiences being judged and labeled as disbelief (*kufr*) or Islam.[106] The *inner* mechanism of existence is equally free from a subjective judgment of being good or evil. He believed that advanced and trained minds have the knowledge of the *inner* mechanism, or the *secret*.[107] He warned that the external differences in paths have fooled people, but actually the destination of the enlightened is the same.[108]

The notion of good or evil and its dual judgment stems only from the people; otherwise how could the absolute truth judge itself by such dual designations?[109] The absolute truth can be known only if the heart's secret code is cracked.[110] The non-dual Love is the highest reality of things, from which all things originate but keep their seemingly differentiated identities, even though they are all equal in having the phenomenon of Love at the heart of their existence.

All things, including religions, cultures, languages, and prophets, are impermanent in the human story—except Love. The single

permanent phenomenon in the history of the world that never gets destroyed and is the source of all the peripheral, impermanent phenomena is the essence of Love. Rumi points out that we create gods and paint them with our devotion and spirit, and after they expire in history we throw them back into oblivion.[111] It is historically true that many native gods at some point stopped being worshipped. In Rumi's picture of things, what we believe in today will become outdated in the future, but Love will not.

In the world of Rumi, Love is a pre-human and immortal force of life. Love has no image of its own; the hundred thousand differentiated images of things are sheer perceptions in the human mind.[112] Love is formless and invisible; only through the work of our sensory experience does the world take form. The perceptible, variegated world is like foam produced from the tide of the giant ocean in the background.[113] The metaphor of the ocean and its foam is one of the most enticing images that Rumi employs (in his *Divan* as well). In his analogy, the foam is from the material of the ocean, but the shape of its bubbles is the corrupted form of its formless source. The bubbles of the foam are produced through cause and effect, whereas the ocean exists without its opposite, and without cause and effect.[114] The foam is understood as the mirror of reality and at the same time as an illusion of reality. Love is like the ocean, without an opposite; it is pure white with no opposing colors and with no working of the senses nor rationality to counter it—Love has no image.[115] Love, however, exists in the human consciousness and heart. To discover Love in one's own system, it must be discovered outside human sensory experience.

Rumi invited his readers to unlearn their previously acquired knowledge and understand the timelessness of a pure consciousness of Love.

CONCLUSION

From the message of his writings and based on a historical reasoning, it can be asserted that he laid a foundation of a new creed, new school for external human harmony, and a method for a direct and individual spiritual attainment without needing religions. He proves this by setting his life as the example of a historical reality. Much happened to Rumi after he became educated in a scholarship that he eventually had to unlearn. His goal in the last 30 years of his life became one thing, even though that goal has been erroneously labeled: it was to view existence with complete clarity, without letting it be obscured by multiplicity, history, and religion. In the poetry of his *Divan*, he uses the

name *Shams Tabrizi* to refer to this spiritual experience of his vibrating mind. He also called it Love, the bodiless and silent (*khāmoush*) reality. When the person of Shams disappeared from Konya, Rumi found the symbolic reality of Shams in his consciousness and in his heart.[116] Shams, the person, was no longer the focus. It is therefore not surprising that, in a reference in *Fīhi mā fīh*, Rumi ridicules those who claimed to have seen Shams in this or that town. As he said, not every blind person can see him. One must be insightful to see (the bodiless) Shams.[117]

Chapter 5A

Rumi's Philosophical Pyramid: Love and Shams-Consciousness

The previous chapter was designed to place Rumi and his teachings in the context of the historical realities of his day. Now the epistemology of Rumi's world-view and poetry demand a reexamination. This chapter is dedicated to reconstructing the internal world of Rumi as expressed through the avalanche of his words, analogies, imagery, and metaphors. Over the three years that Rumi and Shams spent together, an irreversible shift of understanding occurred in Rumi's mind. And for the next thirty years, Rumi's writings resulted in a monumental body of work in the form of poetry. The poetry of his *Divan* is multilayered, melodic, with powerful imagery, whereas the *Masnavi* is full of literary and spiritual anecdotes. The *Divan* and the *Masnavi* are not organized thematically or chronologically. This opens the door to new ways of structuring the contents. A uniquely accessible way to grasp the key issues Rumi presented in the two works' thousands of verses is to divide the verses into four major categories in a pyramidal structure—bearing in mind that Rumi did not intend to give his work and experience any structure whatsoever. In this context, we realize that Rumi is the philosopher of experience instead of the philosopher of concepts.

This pyramidal model classifies Rumi's multilayered and complex ideas in four horizontal levels. The construction of the model has two main objectives: to bring the massive texts into some sort of order and, more importantly, to identify and orient the levels of consciousness that Rumi presented. It is also intended to avoid loose interpretations of the words and metaphors that Rumi used. Often it is not

the words or the stories themselves that are the goal; rather, they are arrows pointing at something else. It would seem overly ambitious to cover all aspects of Rumi's rich literature, and that is not the goal here. The idea in this and the next chapter is to build a unified practical model in which both his far-reaching universalism and his succinct imagery and metaphors can be more readily accessed and interpreted. Rumi's grand goal was to unite the heterogeneous world into one single truth without being deceived by the multitude of appearances in the world.

As a metaphor for this four-leveled pyramid, (i) Rumi can be imagined to have stood on the peak of a mountain and beheld a panoramic view. His challenge was to describe for his audience what he could see and what he experienced on that peak. The eminent thesis of Rumi's poetry in the *Divan* is exactly that: to elucidate the experience of the peak, a pure consciousness, which is an open space free from the banalities and dualities or pluralities of the mundane world. This open space has no up, no down, no east, and no west to it. It is the world of speechlessness, where words do not have meanings. This is the highest level of the pyramid. But to make this understandable, (ii) Rumi decided to step down one level from the peak to where words for describing the space above would be accessible. At times, to make it even more tangible, (iii) Rumi moved down another level and used even more concrete examples, such as pairs of opposites, to emphasize the contrast between the space above and the world of dualism/pluralism below. Thus, he skillfully used the dualism of the conventional world to describe the non-dualism of the peak. Finally, (iv) he descended to the ground level to use everyday stories, religious tales, anecdotes, and refined metaphors for those who might be able to perceive the formless space on the peak. The grand views in his poetry are sometimes expressed overtly and other times deftly disguised, but by viewing his writings through the lens of this pyramidal structure, we can begin to absorb them with a unique new clarity.

LEVEL 1: LOVE, SHAMS-CONSCIOUSNESS, AND SILENCE

Let us begin with the peak, the inexplicable open space, the purity of non-dualism and non-pluralism. This was consciousness, an experience to which Rumi gave several names: *love (ʿishq)*, *shams tabrizi*, *non-articulation-silent* (*khāmoush*), *placeless* (*lā makān*), neither this nor that and *nameless* (*bī nām o neshān*), *sun*, *friend*, and *she*, among others. The major part of the *Divan* relates the experience

and description of the "summit" of this pyramid. It describes an undivided consciousness within which all individualities and personal gods have merged. Shams and Rumi tapped into that undivided perception of reality while somehow not letting conventional reality collapse. Throughout the *Divan,* it seems as though the language shifts, but Rumi's focus does not change. His epistemological and ontological construction of reality are described from the top down. The top is silent and undivided Love, which is what stands for Shams-consciousness. It is timelessness.

Formless and Permanent Love

The tip of Rumi's philosophical pyramid, as it appears in his poetry, is the indescribable "empty, formless, and permanent space," the source of everything. As mentioned in previous chapters, Love (*'Ishq*) is an undefinable, formless, primordial force of life; immortal, immutable, and in the heart of all phenomena. This is the ultimate frontier, which explains the foundation of unchangeable existence, having one common denominator at its core that human consciousness can mystically access and philosophize about but cannot empirically substantiate. The mystics usually are not specific about the interaction between the fleeting (*fānī*) consciousness and the non-fleeting, immortal force of life, or Love—an interaction which might render one's consciousness also immortal (*bāqī*). It is a fundamental mystical enigma whether the consciousness of mystics could actually attain immortal consciousness. If this is true, then the consciousness of Shams and Rumi had been rendered immortal.[1]

Having inherited the term *Love*, Rumi encoded it to mean the immortal, ultimate reality of all things outside of time and space. Love is the Infinite Being. Whether his conception of the "Religion of Love" was somewhat a continuation of the Qalandarī mystics and poets, or he borrowed the metaphor of "Love" to reconstruct a philosophy in his own style, more comparative research is needed to put into perspective all previous applications of the term *Love,* particularly by Sanā'ī and 'Attār and certain later poets, especially Hāfiz.

The notion that Love is equal to God and therefore an expression of religious belief, as has been proposed by some,[2] is a religious assumption and possibly a misinterpretation. Often the interpreters of Rumi have erroneously equated the word *love* in his poetry with the notion of "divine love." Love in Rumi's usage does not mean everyday "love" or affinity towards loved ones. Through such a clichéd use, "divine love" has become a superficial and nebulous concept in popular usage.

Because the modern use of the word *love* has various different connotations in conventional, romantic, and religious-spiritual contexts, it is quite clear that in Rumi's poetry *love* has been misleading and the source of great misunderstanding. "Love" in Rumi's poetry is not an expression of emotional rapture or some sort of sentimentalism. Nor is it the love of God or God's love (*hub*) for His Creation in its Koranic framework, a debate that has led to confusing and contradictory characterizations of "Love" in scattered writings about Rumi. Because of the common use of the word *love*, Rumi himself declares its substantive meaning to be different from the public understanding of it (M: V: 877), "beyond and above this or that person's supposition" (D: 2194). Clarifying this misunderstanding can pave the way for an alternative interpretation.

Love served as a metaphor for Rumi's construction of the immortal principle or pure consciousness that is at the heart of everything. In challenging the existing organized religions of his time, Rumi did not shy away from adopting the word *Love* (or even *Shams*) for the highest reality in his *Divan*.

Love is the silent and formless force, which roams in timelessness, which gives life to mortals but itself never dies; it takes the role of a cryptic god and has a mysterious seat in the heart, as Rumi poeticizes. It is unlike the image of the Semitic or nativist/indigenous God. It is a non-judgmental energy of existence, which does not discriminate against or punish people for not worshipping it. It is serene and follows its own intrinsic and non-changeable nature. It is deep in the heart; it is veiled; it pushes men and women to escape being deluded by the world of appearances. It is, in a sense, a god that predates all other gods of history. The ubiquitous appearance of the word *Love* in Rumi's poetry must be understood in the broader context—of being the source of life, pure consciousness, primordial mind, a mind outside of our conventional mind, an immortal state that all mortal things are transposed against, in which mortals pass away but Love remains intact in the background to continue the ongoing drama of existence. Love is apparent and non-apparent; it operates inside and outside of things and inside and outside of time. It is as if all the impermanent rolling world is transposed against the permanent and immutable Love—almost like a running film against the white screen, one being transitory, the other unchanging and permanent, where the coupling makes the reality of the latter possible.

Love is the foundation in the life of all phenomena. It is a force of life free from any contamination of time and individual characteristics, even though it is in the core of every animate and inanimate object.

The notion of Love revolves around timelessness, while time and the world are the subjects of linearity in the minds of the creationist thinkers. As Rumi utters it, "a hundred worlds need to come to an end and yet the description of Love remains unfinished" (M: V: 927), or "the two worlds are like a seed in the beak of Love" (M: V: 953). In one *ghazal*, Rumi reveals the spiral construction of physical reality stemming from the formless reality of Love. Even the four elements of which the world is composed stemmed from Love (D: 749). The world represents the skin and Love the fruit inside (D: 2104).

In other words, Love is the greatest life and life-giver (D: 834, 1159). Rumi finds different metaphors to refer to this life-giving force. Love is light shining inside the carnal body; the layers will have to be ripped off in order to see the glowing torch of Love within. "Why are you in doubt of the light unless you are blind to your own source?" (D: 161) The source of this light has been distracted by the multiplicity of bodies. (D: 109) "O face of immortal Love, you made beautiful entry into our body, so that you would take our life from its prison and bring it into the One" (D: 29).

In order to reach a better understanding of the notion of Love in the context of Rumi, it is necessary to use the notion of the *absolute*, or unchanging, against the *non-absolute*, which is in a state of flux. Love is not in a state of flux, it is absolute: it is analogous to the ocean, not the river; it is the sun, not the cloudy sky; it is the undying force of life deep in us and not our body. The human intellect is in a state of flux, and that is why it falls short in grasping what is absolute. Love is a state of permanent life whose content, culture, origin, and direction is unknown to the human sensory system and conventional consciousness. Love is not concerned with the passing of linear time in the way human consciousness perceives and records it. Also, Love is not concerned or tainted with the evolution of history or with how human beings have developed religion in order to keep one another in check through separating those who believe in God from those who do not. Rumi's definition of Love and the state of union with it rejects as trivial such things produced within a limited frame of history. A practitioner who acquires knowledge and becomes absorbed in this precognitive Love attains a state of mind that experiences the immortality and oneness of Love while living in a body that knows birth and death. The *domain of love* (*dowlat-e 'ishq* or *mulk-e 'ishq*) is meant to maintain a state of mind free from its temporal and sorrowful state (D: 767, 1393, 1702). This way one becomes, in Rumi's sense, a *lover* while living in the midst of all impermanent things, including incoming and outgoing thoughts.

Love does not follow the laws of the impermanent world; it has its own innate and permanent principles (D: 28, 176). The school of Love teaches different precepts than a theological school (479). Love is immortal (D: 1129); it is the sea of meaning (D: 1700) and the mine of all gems (D: 1819). The beginning of human life and its end entails Love (D: 1992). One can begin to explore only the beginning of Love, but because its realm is endless, no one has explored it to the end (D: 991). People wonder what this Love is and how one describes it. Rumi tells them to ask for Love outside of the clouds of words—to experience it firsthand, unless one's heart is asleep, vulnerable, or feeble (*nāzikān-e narm*) (D: 1082, 1097). Upon its discovery, within the center of Love a sun rises (D: 1210). The radiance of this Love is boundless, but people have used love only lustfully (D: 1735). The comprehension of Love among the unskilled can seem foreign, like speaking Arabic among Persian speakers (D: 1769). It is Love that runs through everything, including in the veins of our forefathers and children; thus, Love is a father and a child at the same time (D: 1430). Love and lovers are ancient, but each time Love comes into a life, it is fresh (D: 1132).

Love, however, implicates one's faith and religion when caught in the conflict between fidelity and infidelity. Love burns down both religious fidelity and infidelity as well as overcoming war and peace (D: 1331). Knowing that Love operates outside of religions' perceptions, Rumi declares that Love is the territory of infidelity, and when one understands this, then one becomes contained by Love (D: 1409). By being contained by Love, one is no longer the prisoner of dualism, oscillating between the world of demon and angel (D: 1410). One is exposed again for foolishly falling in love, but this time it is a different kind of Love (D: 1104). The experience of Love cannot be attained through the power of conventional intellect.

> The moving around of the masses is from the force of Love, and Love is pre-eternal (*azal*). (D: 472)

> The silliness of Love is better than a hundred thousand rising intellects; The intellect boasted about having a head, while Love is without head and limbs (formless). (D: 483)

> In the circle of the lovers, there is no room for the intellectuals. (D: 172)

From Rumi's point of view, the reality of Love has always been there, but has been tainted by the clouds of human events and the

human interpretations of those events. All the changes generated by the millions of activities in the physical world have become the source of illusions because of their impermanent nature, blocking the only and immutable source of everything (M: V: 879). Rumi perceived each activity of time as a metaphor of moving clouds that block the reality of the sun, the same shining sun that exists every day above the clouds. The clouds of illusion result from the mechanism of change. Out of clouds, so to speak, each generation inescapably defines its own share of reality.

Two of Rumi's lines are especially revealing: that Love's own reality has become a veil to itself, and that even though people know of its existence they have no access to it (D: 423). What exactly is Love, Rumi asks, human being or god? "I am ashamed of Love if I call it humankind; I am afraid of God to even pronounce it as god." (D: 450) It is no wonder that the human body became an object of veneration, because Love's signature is all over it, day and night (D: 465). People take their life from Love and Love's own life is from pre-eternal time . . . the wine of Love is beyond religious permissibility or prohibition (D: 472; M: VI: 1057). Despite the impermanency of the whole world and of its sacrifices for Love, the immortal Love at the end comes to live in this impermanent world (D: 427).

Rumi declares Love not only to exist within time without an end, but also promises eternity to those lovers whose hearts discover and become absorbed by it (D: 455). But if Love is veiled and no conscious mind has knowledge of it, then how is it found? Rumi's answer is that Love's own power of attraction pulls those who have been captivated by it, a state that bypasses the conscious mind (*fanā*). Indeed, Love cannot be learned from books or through scholasticism (D: 395, 462). It was when Rumi abandoned his previous scholasticism and embraced Shams' paradigm of Love that he unashamedly criticized the founders of the scholastic theologies of the time; the founders of the Hanafī and Shāfei[3] schools never considered Love in their lessons and transmissions (D: 499).

Shams-Consciousness Is the Same as Love

The name *Shams* in the poetry of the *Divan,* similar to the word *Love,* has often been subject to the misinterpretation that Rumi was writing of his lost guru and friend. And certainly, after the final disappearance of Shams from Konya, Rumi did undertake a desperate and fruitless search for him. However, he ultimately found a greater awareness in his heart which he called "Shams." Sultan Valad chronicles Rumi's

last return from Damascus after looking for Shams everywhere: "He said, 'I am indeed him, what are you looking for? I am identical to him, from now on speak of me.'"[4] From then on, Rumi for the most part uses the name "Shams" in the *Divan* to refer to a non-corporeal Shams. Instead, "Shams" became representative of Love-consciousness, the immortal entity. The heart's lens, as Rumi put it, perceives a Shams who is the opposite of his worldly body (D: 1937). The light of Shams counts, not really its torch-holder, which is his body (D: 1827). "Who is Shams? It is you, it is you" (D: 1526). Thus, bodiless Shams, Love, and vocalization (D: 2056) all became synonymous in Rumi's poetry. The names of those who, like Shams, experience the unalterable Love would become immortal. In Rumi's poetry, Shams became the sun, love, a shoreless sea, beloved, moon-faced, and other such names (D: 2641, 2644). Konya thus became the capital of Love: "From Konya radiates the light of Love, which reaches Samarqand and Bukhara" (D: 2904).

Therefore, the interpretation of "Shams" in Rumi's poetry as referring to a person must, for the most part, be abandoned. There is at least one instance where Rumi warns us about confusing Shams as a person and Shams as Love or Shams-consciousness:

> Since the eyes of our head have inevitably veiled the eye of the heart,
> Shams Tabrizi has also become a veil for Shams Tabrizi. (D: 399)[5]

The alternation between the terms *Love* and *Shams* is a fascinating aspect of Rumi's poems. In about 1,000 out of almost 3,228 *ghazal*s of the *Divan* (in the Iranian edition), the name *Shams Tabrizi* connotes the formless reality, the secret, silent Shams-consciousness, immortal Love, the ever-existing phenomenon and never-dying sun. In addition to *ghazal*s that close with remarks about Shams, there are *ghazal*s that are completely dedicated to the dimensions of Shams-consciousness (D: 1081, 1859, 1860, 1978, 1981). The non-locality and timelessness (D: 1877) of Shams make him an enigmatic phoenix of all times (D: 1810).

Shams as moon-faced[6] and even containing the moon itself is noteworthy in many of the poems (D: 901, 905, 1088, 1092, 2640, 2644). In most places, however, metaphors involving the "sun" used alongside the word *Shams* create an elegant synergy with Shams' name, which in Arabic means the *sun*. Shams is the sun of our existence (D: 603). Shams is a sun who has no particular location yet whose light brightens and pulls the heart; it makes all the impermanent entities (*fānī*) permanent (*bāqī*). The sun of Shams, whose never-dying

light reveals all the meanings, is not in the physical Universe (D: 2757, 2754, also 2717). When it rises, all the believers and non-believers prostrate before it. It always stays day. It is never eclipsed. It is a sun that brightens the entire cosmos and resides outside of the impermanent cycle of time and the physical world.[7] Of course, Rumi throughout his poetry consciously refers to the earliest light to be the sun before human beings.

The position of the sun deludes an observer below; the sun seems to rise in the east and then set in the west but, in fact, the sun in that open space above has no such orientation for itself. The eye that can see the sun in its non-eastern and non-western phases is the eye that has imagined and eventually experienced the sun from the sun's own eye. Perceiving the sun as such is not dependent on any faith, nor on whether one is from the community of the favored people of God, nor on the possession of vast knowledge (D: 2080). It is intuitive experience seeking the source outside of our conventional consciousness. In Rumi's world of words, Shams and Love are symbolized by the sun. The intertwining of Love, Shams, and sun as the same indescribable phenomenon is best described in the verses below:

> A sun is from neither the orient nor the occident but shines from our inner self;
> From this sun gently the walls and doors of our existence come to dance.
> As small orbiting fragments we seek the sun.
> The minor orbit is a dance of our deeds in the day and night.
> We entertain the lovers who seek Love,
> Because now we have Shams Tabrizi as our compass. (D: 136)

> O Shams Tabrizi you are the trail and trajectory of all spirits;
> It is from your luminosity that the sun receives its warmth. (D: 75)

> Look at the godly phoenix, our king, Shams Tabrizi,
> A kind of sun who is from neither the east, nor the west, nor any place at all. (D: 64)

Rumi also writes of the wine of Shams, the secret of Shams, Shams as the holder of the truth, Shams as a force that renders the impermanent ones permanent, and Shams as he who makes a ladder to bring one up to one's own true nature. Shams is the ultimate source and the ultimate reality of all the existing phenomena.[8] Shams is he who created a venue for us to have knowledge of the placeless (*lā makān*) phenomenon (D: 2729).

Shams Tabrizi, you are a sun covered with the cloud of words;
Once your light emerged, all the speech and words would disappear. (D: 132)

Shams' light radiated from Tabriz and I said to him,
Your radiance is joined with everyone and yet remains irreplaceable. (D: 464)

Shams Tabrizi, how can I portray your allure? You are the sun;
I possess a hundred penetrating tongues, but none is able to describe you. (D: 387)

O Shams Tabrizi, you transcend the limitation of dark night,
You are neither eastern nor western, so let us shorten our speech. (D: 525)

The metaphor of the sun occurs throughout the *Divan*. (Such sun analogies are somehow reminiscent of the Mithraistic "sun-god.") Rumi never stops articulating the many aspects of the sun, whose attributes are beyond the ordinary. This magnificent sun, the source of truth, is hidden between day and night like the heart, hidden from the eye. It is the source of all secrets; without seclusion and austerity, one can never reach its essence. Each particle of it is pregnant with hundreds of joys. With each sunrise, it makes the horizon smile and it wakes up those who have been asleep even for hundreds of years. On earth, it cooks everything that is raw, and sweetens the grapes. It brings delight to the moon.[9] The encounter of the limitless and non-dual Shams has made it possible for the world of multiplicity of sea and moon to appear and perform (D: 649, 697, 1578). Rumi considers those who embrace Shams will have a life, unlike that of the skeptics, of a permanent monarch on earth and in the cosmos (D: 1340, 1639, 1754, 1954). Shams is the compass who leads us out of this narrow and tight world (D: 1905); he points to the dawn of eternity (D: 2029). Shams' nostalgia is the ache and at the same time the healing (D: 150). The experience of melancholic pain is caused by the bewilderment embedded in our search for Love, which is a state of joy without substitute (D: 223; M: I: 71). Rumi sometimes seems conflicted about discussing the situation: on the one hand, he is leery of revealing the secrets of Shams to the masses, and yet on the other he asks Shams to vibrate the consciousness of the eager seekers by making his own voice heard (D: 858, 1161).

Another metaphor for Shams is "sea" because of its vastness and because by joining the sea one reaches one's serene and permanent

source. The view of the sea from Shams' eyes would make us realize the narrowness of our view of the sea (D: 888, 1099, 1910, 1924). Without entering the realm of Shams, one cannot join the ocean, or even glance at the moon (D: 649).

There are a number of poems and quotations exemplifying Shams' standing as a proxy god, the monarch of the world, and a substitute for Love. Rumi pours out the experience of the peak of his conceptualized pyramid throughout his *Divan*. Shams is the supreme entity without peer (D: 137, 1918, 2672), and he is "the king of life, the god of heart (*khodāvand-e dil*) and consciousness (*sar*)." "Shams-Din, in truth, is at the top god of all gods, from the grace of whose life all glorious things came into existence" (D: 151, see also 153, 1027, 2178, 2201). Rumi recommends that those on the path of perfection visualize the perfect Shams in their spiritual ascendency (D: 402, 1554). Shams is an object of veneration and direction (*qibla*) for all prayers. "Shams made me [Rumi] ageless." "The emanation of his light safeguarded me [Rumi] from burning in the fires of hell" (D: 175, 176, 177, 180, 1164). Shams contains Love within himself; rise up and radiate your light to the universe (*aflāk*). "This world is a transitory pretext, come Shams Tabriz that you are the quintessential to the supreme realm and conqueror of all gates" (D: 3116). Those who fall in love with Shams become non-believers (*kāfir*), as they become Muslim in the brothels (*kharābāt*) (D: 210, 212, 334, 1157). Having known Shams, no one could remain sober anymore; the non-believer and the believer are rendered into inaction and the theologian and the wine-seller will both become intoxicated (D: 390). Shams rules our existence and because of his principle, he is also the king of the two worlds (D: 409, 461). Our impermanent bodies and the entire physical world—all corporeal existence—would become subject to extinction except for Shams (D: 551). Shams' face is Rumi's religion (D: 1063). Shams is a great magnet that draws the fragment of heart towards itself in love union (D: 490). Shams' pure beauty is a hundred thousand times greater than the handsome Joseph (D: 797, 1153, 1942).

Here the ethereal Shams represents the experience of Love and formless reality. However, while Rumi was composing the *ghazal*s of the *Divan*, he had the unfailing support and spiritual companionship of Salāh al-Din, and later Husām al-Din, who for Rumi served as gurus and as agents of the same pure consciousness. Thus, it is not surprising to read of both men described in the same terms of non-dual Shams-consciousness. When Salāh al-Din is declared to be both present and absent, to be the guide to show us our royal image, and much more, we know Rumi is depicting the formless Salāh al-Din.

"It is neither this nor that, it is Salāh the truth of the faith. If I find a trusted companion then I'll reveal who he is." (D: 577)[10] Rumi's use of these two names, along with that of Shams, is an expression of his gratitude and devotion to the gurus, especially those with unified energy. The selfless Rumi, who usually only mentions the names of his close companions, does refer to his own name, Jalal al-Din, in one *ghazal*, succumbing to the greatness of Shams-consciousness (the lion): "Sleep, and leave the writing behind, since the lion in the mind cannot be tamed." (D: 1197)

In Rumi's poetry, Shams is understood to be the same as Love: formless, the ultimate source of existence, and a never-dying consciousness that is passed on from one generation to another untainted. Shams is a deft choice of word for Rumi to describe the highest reality, God, and even the source of liberation from the world of illusive impermanency. The *ghazal*s of the *Divan* that end with references to Shams may be viewed as referring to a consciousness rather than a person.

Non-Articulation (*khāmoush*): The Nature of Love and Shams

Another concept that Rumi uses to represent the peak of his pyramid is "non-articulation" (*khāmoush*). The real nature of Love is soundless. The force that gives life to everything is itself quiet and speechless. To share the experience of formless Love and Shams, Rumi uses *khāmoush* at the ends of almost five hundred *ghazal*s, and even more *ghazal*s end with the message of non-articulation without using the word *khāmoush*. The word *khāmoush* in Persian in this context has at least two important meanings: to keep silent, and to extinguish a fire (flame) (*khāmoush kardan*). Under Shams' influence, Rumi chose a pseudonym for his poetry and his practice. His son, Sultan Valad, also chose that word, *khāmoush*, as a pseudonym in his poetry.[11] Naturally, it was not purely for aesthetic reasons that Rumi used this word; it was to share the silent existence, as well as the experience of absolute reality, in the background and at the heart of everything that exists.

Similar uses of the concept of *khāmoush* in other traditions, particularly certain Asian schools of thought, further indicate the universalism of Rumi's poetry and teachings. For example, the word *silent* (or *silence*) is used in some of the Upanishads to represent an ultimate reality and the real existence of the Brahman—the only real existence in the face of the unreal changing world. "The sound of Brahman is OM. At the end of OM there is silence. There is something beyond

our mind which abides in *silence* within our mind. There are two ways of contemplation of Brahman: in sound and in *silence*. By sound we go to *silence*."[12] Brahman's "name is Silence."[13]

Another significant correlation with the term *khāmoush*, when it means "to extinguish," is its Buddhist equivalent. In the Buddha's Third Noble Truth, the word *nirvana* is a Sanskrit combination of the two words *nir* ("no" or "out") and *vana* ("blow"), referring to "blowing out [the flame]"—extinguishing the flame of the craving, restless and fearful mind in order to let true human nature ("Buddha-" or "awakened-nature") surface. Similarly, silence is used in the practice of Zen, a contemplative form of Buddhism, implying transmission of the knowledge of awakening without words.

Rumi uses *khāmoush* at the end of many *ghazal*s in the *Divan* to signal the end of excessive and mundane speech that is unfit to describe Love or Shams-consciousness. There are multiple uses and various applications of the term *khāmoush* in the *ghazal*s, of which we will now consider a few principle ones.[14]

Love is silent, and silence depicts Love better than words can. Human beings are conditioned to learn speech and express the world around them with words understood by others. But such words do not necessarily express either the true nature of the objects or the deep formless root of everything. So words distort the human mind, causing it to lose contact with its own silent nature. Silence is the way to understand the supreme Love as the veiled source of all things in the world (D: 112). Rumi openly commands his readers to be silenced like Love, since we are born of Love (D: 344). Love whispers its guidance in our ears to keep silent, and Love laughs at those who do not follow (D: 367, 368). Silence is the path of Love, whose guidance shows the way out of both worlds (D: 374). Silence is the first and last science of non-existence (*lā*), says the lover (D: 567). The transitory nature of speech is inherent in ordinary human life; Rumi thus advises speaking of things that have the value of timelessness, expressed through an intuitive voice (D: 568, 624). Only through the practice of silence will the revelations of the truth be uncovered (D: 233). Silent Love lives side by side with the human heart; to reach it necessitates silence. The silent lover is at rest, like a mirror in the silence of the desert (D: 192).

There is no apparent sign; it is itself,
It is us since it is part of us.
Say no more, for surely the validation of Love
In its silence is our certainty and reason for being. (D: 504)

Silent! What is the use of speech where Love is present?
Your worth is no less than gold; the beloved is without tongue.
(D: 438)

Surrender and remain silent to be an *imām* [religious orator]:
Your speech will reach no one; the ultimate *imamate* belongs to Love.
(D: 405)

Be silent, only use the speech of your pure consciousness (*zamīr*),
Whilst the speech of your ego will only guide you to actions. (D: 230)

There are many riddles; remain silent!
Ask the Supreme; he will tell you the answers. (D: 181; see also 217)

Being aware of the linguistic obstacles, Rumi constantly provides reminders to practice silence in order to safeguard the "secret" of the unrevealed nature of Love. Because of the skepticism of the masses, Rumi advises keeping the knowledge of Love out of the reach of the dogmatic troublemakers who are numerous—found to the "left and the right" throughout the streets of town (D: 11, 21, 34, 76, 78, 80, 91, 92, 95, 218, 295, 475, 546, 595). Poetically speaking, silence itself produces a realm of understanding that acts like a magnet, pulling those silent minds and lovers up and towards itself (D: 60, 97).

Through the use of *khāmoush,* Rumi created a brake pedal to stop himself as well as his readers whenever he felt his lines were violating the definitions of the "infinite" through empty words. To Rumi, the nature of the world is quiet; one should learn from and follow the quietism of the world. Only in a state of absorption almost like intoxication would silence take the consciousness to the true realm of understanding (D: 82, 119, 143, 381, 451). In certain *ghazal*s, Rumi seems to realize that he is stuck "in the mud" with words, having exhausted their limitations; at that point he silences himself in favor of a more meaningful understanding (D: 38, 40, 102, 103, 116, 591). The idea of silence is to reverse the bewilderment of the mind and attain clarity and liberation so that pure deeds can emerge from it (D: 385, 386, 404, 408, 549, 610). Without words and speech, the realm of speechlessness brings knowledge of Love, the Friend (D: 440, 442, 512, 569). "Speech is a habit of my tongue, but when Shams Tabrizi is there, the heart's vibration gives a speech, reminding me to keep everything silent." (D: 578)

Khāmoush is also a means of intuition and means to visualize beyond day and night, seeing eternity and the Supreme (D: 539, 582, 589).

In the vast ocean, petty talks are not fitting (D: 6, 565). Silence seems to be the moment of death, but it actually gives a new life (D: 636). By speech, the hidden treasure is revealed: "Cover it, cover it, you are a concealed gem" (D: 637). "Keep silent; where the turning world situates us is where we have destined ourselves to be" (D: 647).

> I'll extinguish it, take control, and hide this candle;
> It is a candle that in its flame hides the light of a sun, a moon, and even a butterfly. (D: 526)

> Remain silent, because if I give hints about it,
> You will leave your self-image and depart from yourself and your abode. (D: 436)

Thus, Rumi wrote of the highest goal, Love and Shams-consciousness, by cautioning about the speechlessness of their realm.

Love and the Dogma of God

It seems to be inevitable to avoid the image-construction of god throughout human culture and history. Even though such image-construction has been questioned and overthrown time and again by mystics, yogis, and sages appearing in different times and cultures, the dogma is still unfolding. Shams-Rumi's rebellion was aimed at reforming the Semitic/Islamic imagery of god while at the same time to arguing against the central rift and disharmony that has caused in those who believe in such god and those who do not. The acute question remains whether Rumi actually distinguished the impersonal god of Love from the personal Semitic/Islamic God, the Creator. Did he convert the external devotion to God into an internal devotion in order to transform the dualism of the worshipper and the worshipped into a non-dualism, the worshipper and worshipped as one? Are there two gods involved in Rumi's poetry? Or does he actually speak of *no* god in his *Divan*? He certainly emphasizes the consciousness (heart) that perceives the impersonal generator at the core of every impermanent living being. Perhaps Rumi kept the idea of personal and impersonal god intentionally inconsistent in his *Divan*. It could be that in his (and Shams') vision, everything, including all types of gods, is an illusion except the principle of Love, which lives eternally in its own consciousness.

Rumi nevertheless introduces Love as an inner god, an impersonal god that has always dwelt in timelessness. Rumi's Love is simply a word chosen to represent this mysterious force. Religions and cultures

have come and gone trying to depict the same god but have taken an external form of some sort and have eventually moved towards discrimination, fanaticism, and war.

How does Rumi's formulation of god corroborate with the Semitic-Islamic God? Rumi's handling of this dilemma at first may seem similar to Ibn 'Arabi's approach, but Rumi's formulation makes it quite distinctive. Ibn 'Arabi bridges the presence of God in the material and the transcendental world. God as a participating phenomenon present in all worldly manifestations (*tashbīh*, a God similar to creation) certainly differs from a God who is distant from the world of animate and inanimate manifestation (*tanzīh*, free from imperfect mortals).[15] The former conception is non-dualistic, God and the world being one and the same entity in human consciousness; the latter is purely monotheistic. From the Islamic point of view, this formulation (innovation) may seem contradictory. But, more urgently and importantly, the paradox served to satisfy monotheism's (*tawhīd*'s) need for an exogenous personal and devotional God, and at the same time to address the dialectics of an impersonal god being present at the heart of every phenomenon. The latter conception had been upheld in various forms by certain mystics who claimed that the heart is the throne of god, an idea putting the theologians and mystics at odds.[16] Ibn 'Arabi's paradoxical work is a subject of current discourse.[17]

At some level, the justification was that these two gods also seem to simulate the Islamic-Koranic notions of *Rab* and *Allah*. According to Ibn 'Arabi, *Rab* is the Lord who has created, sustains, and controls existence, whereas *Allah* is God, whose role is more fluid and present in the inner core of His Creation.[18] Yet in the Islamic way of thinking, *Allah* may not be associated with or symbolized as animate or inanimate objects. The name *Allah*, however, does appear here and there in the *Masnavi* and the *Divan*, including when the voice from the burning bush says to Moses: "I am Allah" (M: II: 357), which could be interpreted as proclaiming the ultimate reality or Love to be the common denominator of all existing things, including even the heart of trees. "Even wolves, lions, and bears perceive Love" (M: V: 918).

In Rumi's *Divan,* Love represents the inner god who sits in the heart. Love is thus an impersonal or universal god who through mystical experience becomes a personal god; Rumi's personalized form of this god became Shams-consciousness. Rumi seldom mentions the Islamic God in the *Divan*, in order not to confuse it with the inner god, and the distinction between them remains somewhat ambiguous for the readers. Rumi treats the Islamic God in two ways: sometimes as a legitimate God of the Muslims (as well as Christians and Jews)

who deserves a scholastic treatment, which he provided in his *Masnavi*; or, occasionally, he brings up the term *Allah* in his *Masnavi* (M: III: 437) and *Divan* (D: 616) in a metaphorical context. Far more often, though, he uses Love and Shams to stand for an inner god. Rumi further writes: "It may be a heresy if Islam inquires: you are either the light of god or god himself" (D: 2710).

His conceptualization of the "Religion of Love" (D: 232) not only differs from the legalistic religions by having its central god be Love, but also introduces an innovative self at the core of the "Religion of Love" (D: 175, 479). Rumi emphatically distances himself from belief and disbelief in God as defining characteristics of Islamic and biblical religions (D: 468, 478, 538, 608). For Rumi, those who have found Love in their heart are no longer subject to the judgment of "believer" and "non-believer." Sultan Valad similarly confirms that those who find absoluteness in their religious faith are only concocting, and adds that Love is neither Christian, nor Muslim, nor pagan; nor can Love outwardly be designated a faith as it may be seen from the faithful's perspective.[19]

Maintaining these two images of god seems to have accommodated the religious masses who had been inculcated with the importance of a belief in God, as well as those spiritual and philosophical classes who undertook the search for an impersonal or inner god for all sentient beings. In the Islamic (or even in the Judeo-Christian) world, because of the dangerous consequences of heresy, there was no religious space or tolerance for mystics and rationalist philosophers to simply declare that there was no god phenomenon the way dogmatic religions claim.[20] The religious culture had been so strict about the worshipper and the worshipped God that only Jesus could openly defy the legalistic and monotheistic establishment; a rebellion that entailed sacrifice.[21]

In his own version of rebellion, Rumi went far enough to stretch the imagination of his fellow Muslims with his use of the idea of Love and Shams-consciousness. But although he laid out his idea of non-dualism clearly—that only Love or Shams is the ultimate reality—he has been labeled as a monotheist thinker and a follower of the Prophet of Islam. Among many who have labeled him a monotheist, Alessandro Bausani also argues that any pantheistic and monistic labeling of Rumi is flawed and motivated by European desperation over monotheism.[22] It is true that both *pantheism* and *monism* have more of a European application and are not appropriate for describing Rumi. The same terms have been erroneously applied to the non-dualist schools of thought in India. It is also true that Rumi's non-dualism

has often, and incorrectly, been called monism, or even less correctly, pantheism. Bausani believed that Rumi's lyrical Persian metaphors are responsible for the monist and pantheist misinterpretations.[23] Nonetheless, Bausani and similar authors are themselves responsible for misinterpreting the lyrical metaphors; the problem is not in the poetry. The sublimation of god, in Rumi's *Divan* particularly, requires an absolutely non-rigid and *broader* interpretation than a single religious or monotheistic reading.

Rumi's sophisticated strategy was to avoid polemicizing on the topic of god but to penetrate into the crux of human consciousness, to view the superficial mental construction of the dual world, and finally to perceive it as part of the non-dualistic panorama. He kept his ideas of god ambiguous. But the contradictions scattered throughout his writings meant that his ideas of god in the Islamic context satisfied those who read the *Masnavi*, where he cites Koranic stories, while in his *Divan* he asks his readers why one should go to Mecca for pilgrimage when the highly sought "deity" is right here within the human heart. The perception of Rumi's theism has depended on the culture of his interpreters. As a result, in less- or non-religious settings and cultures, Rumi's poetry, particularly his *Divan*, can be easily categorized as non-theistic and non-dualistic.

LEVEL 2: HOW TO BE ACQUAINTED WITH LOVE

Having discussed the top of Rumi's philosophical pyramid, it is appropriate to describe how to experience Love and Shams-consciousness. On the level immediately below the top of the pyramid, he employs all possible words, imagery, and practices to lay out the nature and experience of Love. He explains that the existing world, despite its multiplicities and dualities, is only the world of appearances. To Rumi, the foundation of existence and its operation is completely and unequivocally non-dualistic. Certainly, the Islamic political and theological establishments have always severely punished those who hold non-dualist beliefs, adopt the notion of an inner god, and obscurely deny the existence of a personal God. The execution of Hallāj (d. 922) for holding similar non-Islamic beliefs became a warning for many later such mystics. But Rumi handled the religious environment of his time by composing the *Divan* in secret. Rumi's use of "Love" deflected the attention of the theologians, since Love was an innocuous and common word used by Sufis and poets before and after Rumi. His use of the name *Shams* to represent the highest reality might not have been so easily forgiven. But after Rumi's death, his *Divan* was

nearly unobtainable in the Islamic world, greatly reducing the negative attention. Once it became accessible in the twentieth century, religious groups loathed its verses while at the same time trying to stress the Koranic stories of his *Masnavi*. In addition, Rumi and his progeny escaped being accused of heresy and subjected to repression partly because of the Ottomans' patronage of the Mevlevi order after Rumi's death.

Rumi's idea of the unity of everything rooted in Love encompasses the reality of the self as well as god. It entails not just seeing the conventional self, but looking deeper at the level of non-existence (non-self) (M: IV: 779–80), a state indicating a source and cause of all phenomena emerging and returning to the same, single source (Love). In the Rumian world, the non-self and non-existence are two sides of the same coin of a single source for reality. This reality of Love is non-articulable, especially with the usual intellectual and linguistic tools of the conventional mind. The poems that substantiate Rumi's idea of one single source for everything are ubiquitous and are worded quite elegantly. Let us first assess his world of "oneism," non-dualism.

One Is the Conceptual Foundation: Human and God (Love) Are Not Two!

Rumi's non-dualism is reminiscent of Bāyazīd's and Hallāj's non-dualism. Although Shams criticized both men for using the pronoun "I" to describe their non-dualistic experience, Rumi nevertheless praises them for their pioneering.[24]

The theme of non-dualism directly challenges the dualistic aspects of Islamic culture—the duality of the worshipped and the worshipper, the Creator and the created world, good and evil. In the dualistic approach, God is infallible and perfect, with an impenetrable essence. His Creation includes an imperfect and fallible human constitution, which constantly requires reminders and correction through prophetic missions sent by God. In other words, God and humans are of two different natures; God can never be defined with anthropomorphic attributions, or could only share human nature by descending from His Throne. Equally, the human being cannot set himself on a level with God. This dualism is incontestable in the Islamic and biblical traditions.

The non-dualism of Rumi professes the sameness of all things in their true nature despite differences in their appearances. This also refers to the emergence of everything from one single source, which carries a fraction of that source in itself; this fraction of a whole, in

Rumi's language, is Love. The differences in appearance, on the one hand, and the mortal, corporeal system, on the other, have deluded humans into believing that they are disconnected from their immortal source of existence. The immortal source and the mortal body are in the same abode, although it may seem paradoxical that one dies and the other does not. Rumi's non-dualism provides a way to explore the immortality of the source of all things in the mortal human body in an attempt to locate and be absorbed by Love in the context of pre- or extra-human consciousness.

Once a human being's conventional consciousness is trained to attain the pure and supreme consciousness, then the absorption of that person's human experience into the immortal force of life would make the fabric of the person's enlightened mind also immortal. Rumi likens this absorption of what exists in the human system into its greater source to a drop joined in the permanent ocean of life (D: 1022, 2609); "once the drop is joined in the ocean it becomes pearl, the drop inside me becomes the ocean" (D: 2115). Love has no color and is a whole which must reabsorb its parts (D: 1330, 1520).

Throughout the *Divan*, the idea of One is unveiled through naked words, through imagery, and through allegories of different sorts. The irony is that pairs of opposites of all different things veil the world of oneness (D: 218, 1077; M: VI: 1065). The human dualisms of body and spirit, male and female, and, even more distractingly, the whole human family with thousands of faces, are illusions blocking the sight of the oneness in the background (D: 179, 189, 1074, 1324, 1517). Dispersed thoughts also fly around as each mind preaches something different, all against a world that is operated by one single inner design (D: 1897). The human mood is trivial and Love is quintessential; why should one drive out Love because of one's viewpoint? (D: 137) Not only different levels of emotions but even the multiplicity of religious orientations stem from one's mental disposition (*nafs*) (D: 941).

The world of good and evil is a dualism that people eventually have to transcend and abolish (D: 703, 1791). Disbelief and belief have joined in one single voice: it is all the same behind the veil. In fact, "Love is belief, and we are the ones who live in disbelief." "If even the knowledgeable ones don't know this, how could it reach the uninformed ones?" (D: 1922) "Here Love is only one, not two" (D: 1309, 2108).

People are born in various lands and are called by different names—Turk, Hindu, Roman, and African—where in fact they are all of the same derivation (D: 1458). Rumi even comments on the Prophet Mohammad and Abu Bakr as two friends hiding in the cave out of fear

of the Meccan enemies: "There were two names with one life; what is the sense of two friends in one cave?"(D: 901). Rumi hardly neglects non-dualistic life even in his *Masnavi*, for instance in his interpretation of a Koranic or religious subject (M: I: 147–49). The multiple stages of human growth from blood clot (embryo) to infant, adult, and old age, or even being a king or servant, this or that, still stem from the same and single root for all human stages (D: 1466, 1573). Rumi goes farther back to say that the primordial source was the same as what it is today (D: 1484). The body is a prototype of the original source, as no shadow exists without light—it is all from the same source (D: 41, 76). The original light has no beyond nor is it a product of cause and effect; it is neither of water nor of earth (D: 1427, 1454, 1517). There is a reality that follows no laws of cause and effect; this is the domain that the seeker must pierce to enter (M: V: 897). The source of all colors is colorlessness, even though the surface of the earth takes on different colors and patterns. Life is colorless; it has neither the color of the sky nor the color of earth (D: 1315). Living in the world of clouds, one misperceives the unique color of the sun (D: 1520). Rumi uses "neither, nor" to indicate negation. But as he alludes in his *Masnavi*, his negation is a method from which the affirmation can emerge and reveal its own secrets (M: VI: 1061).

The natural conditions of life bind the existence of the lover to the beloved; a beloved that is the source of everything (D: 1815, see also 375). The source of life operates in non-dualism and timelessness, yet the human mind knows only dualism, multiplicity, and directional space and time. Rumi invites the lovers to let go of dualism and not take refuge in time in order to take residence in the directionless realm (D: 1821, 1876). "The oneness of your life is mine too." The ecstasy of consciousness could give rise to the permanence and unity of existence (D: 1830).

> From the dawn when I heard the Love tale
> I sacrificed my life, heart, and sight in its trail.
> I wondered if the lover and the beloved were two
> That have always been one; I was too green, too pale. (D: r. 1246)

The unit is part of the whole. No separation or discontinuation is known in the tree of existence, which has one root. Rumi tells readers to let go of the banalities of the surface, so that the truth about our outgrowth and colorful leaves will take us back to the main colorless root (D: 541, 1522). Different faces have prevented children from realizing that they are born of the same royal parent (D: 1537). Rumi

had no misapprehension about Islamic dualism when they hanged Hallāj for his utterance of oneness: "We hang him who says we are one, and we put a flame in him who says we are two" (D: 1719). Love and human identity are not two distinct identities—it is all one (D: r. 1239, 1242, 1299, 1341). The lovers, despite numbering in the thousands, are one; only the non-believers are living in the world of twos and threes (D: 332, r. 1356). Rumi uses the name *Salāh al-Din* in at least two *ghazals* in the same fashion he uses the name *Shams*, to describe reality as beyond this or that and outside of two worlds (D: 576, 577).

One of the most exquisite and explicit metaphors of One is the water of the ocean that has been dispersed to many places, giving rise to the perception that it is several different things, whereas in fact it is and has always been one and the same water. Humankind is a symbol of a drop of water seeking to flow towards its source in the ocean (D: 1073, 1799, 1852, 1995, 2081, 2115, 3129, r. 1263). All rivers and floods lead towards their source in the ocean (D: 94). The non-dualism of existence is continuous, although generations come and go. The error of each generation is in giving rise to tribal deities to represent this single force. Each generation has made an idol out of this colorless, timeless, immutable, unborn, undying, and untainted force of Love. Rumi relinquishes all idols and gods before Love in order to become undistinguishable with it (D: 1462). Rumi's non-dualism represents the oneness and unity of all things simultaneously, being the lover and the beloved, a person and a group, the colors yellow and red, all at the same time and all in one single reality (D: 2591). Rumi's non-dualist philosophy was transmitted to his son, Sultan Valad, a worthy philosophical heir who composed poems to the same effect.[25]

Love Is Non-Existent (Non-perceptible) and Non-articulable

In the second level, Rumi uses words and concepts to describe Love and the experience of attaining it. Love is non-existent, or rather not palpable with cognitive senses. There is no particular place or direction in the world where Love resides, and yet it resides everywhere. It has no face and no apparent form. It has no voice. The existence of human beings lies between their corporeal constitution and the non-corporeal source of their pulsating life. Therefore, the description of Love falls between words and no-words. Rumi's mastery is in articulating its non-articulable nature.

"Non-existence is the ocean and this world of existence is the foam . . . from the ripple of the ocean the foam comes into existence,"

(D: 1902, 3109; M: V: 871, 962, 984, 2579). *ʿAdam* (non-existent) is another metaphor Rumi uses to point to the tip of his ontological construct. Humans have this *ʿadam* inherently, hidden in their physical appearance (*surat*) (D: 95, 771, 1377, 1414, 1426, 1528). The two lives live in a human body; one goes back to earth and the other is released to its cosmic source, Love (D: 14, 996; M: III: 616). Yet the downfall and decay of the human body is not the end; it is not that the *individual body* at the time of death is joined with the source, but its *life* is cyclical as it shall return over and over (D: 911). Death, to Rumi, is but the fall of a leaf; the true life is well hidden in the tree, not in the leaf (M: III: 570; II: 286). Death of the body is the return of the components to their original sources (M: III: 615, 624). In fact, death is a "wedding" with eternity (*abad*) (D: 833). In *ʿadam* one is free from the worldly transactions of dualism (D: 1759). All binary opposites and totality of existence see the number of external forms, but in fact they all carry the same and one essence of life (*jān*) (D: 2016, 2017).

In other places, Rumi calls the non-existent the "real" existence (*hastī*) concealed in human existence, beautifully expressed in a *ghazal* (see D: 1805). Real existence is the state of pure consciousness when "wine" has intoxicated the senses (D: 1912, 1934). This is a point where there is no physical world, nor would existence mean anything; it is the reality beyond, from which only an unparalleled light radiates (D: 1931). The longing of the existing one is to attain the level of mysterious non-existence (D: 1396, 1921). In one of his complex plays on words, Rumi challenges his own sober intellect about his unreal existence and the real non-existence:

> What do I know whether I exist or don't exist, but I know one thing:
> When I am certain that I exist, I do not believe it, my dear; when I am not [in my senses], then I truly exist. (D: 1419)

Naturally, the non-existent cannot be located in any place or direction based on humans' station on earth and their sensorial orientation; it is placeless (*lā makān*) (D: 2896; M: V: 840). The contemplative experience brings it from the placeless to a place before it runs away to its placeless dimension again—like the flood coming from no place into a place (D: 900, 999). Here Love speaks: "I am that moon living in no place (*lā makān*); don't seek me outside, I am inside your being" (D: 1815). The heart is an internal organ that no one can see. Similarly, Love is deeply hidden in the tangible heart—Rumi says the heart and Love are both hidden and yet are perceptible subliminally

(D: 769, 1531, 1567, 1770). The non-existing force of life is the very force and foundation of biological and cosmological existence. It manifests itself through different faces but in reality it is not any of those faces it represents—it misleads the mind (D: 1519).

> Mary would not be pregnant with the light of the Christ
> Had it not been for accommodating the transition of non-existence to non-existence. (D: 796)

Non-articulation is another emphasis similar to silence (*khāmoush*). To shorten the speech is a way to reach the meaning. This includes Rumi's own poetry, where words are empty of real experience (D: 23, 229). Love is naked, why should it be clothed with words? Tear and take off the dress of speech (D: 314). Rumi uses words to describe it, but he declares that the principle of this cannot be intellectualized, nor is it possible to say it all (D: 325). The distraction of speech can take a well-experienced individual in the direction of inexperience (D: 539). He warns his readership not to be confused and perplexed with his portrayal, but he is satisfied with giving hints, while it is the horizon of intuition that must be expanded (D: 637, 1170). The language of the one without a tongue must be learned (D: 1183). How can a nameless be given a name? "He who can say its name, his bones will never decay in the tomb" (D: 1235). The real articulation is without sounds and words; the rest is unreal (D: 1299). Articulation of the non-articulable is an in-between state (D: 1940). Logic can challenge and hide the matters of life, but when it comes to Love, all the veiled matters will have to be unveiled (D: 1562). In silence our being is bewildered in favor of discovering Love (D: 1268).

To be like water, refuse to take forms; leave the words and descriptions behind, they are from this world, and this world is only a bridge (D: 1358). The primordial root of existence was without speech; let us articulate that "speech" (D: 1529). The flaw of our unreal existence is because of our speaking tongue (D: 1535). The tongue has locked the gate of the palace of the wordless heart (D: 1845). Even with a hundred arts of discourse, the unrevealed must be articulated subliminally (D: 1852). Use my language to tell anecdotes, but do not reveal the secret (D: 1820). It is atrocious to tell the story of the monarch of Love to the masses; the moment it is brought up, conversation should go in a different direction (D: 1724). Rumi reveals that half of the story of Love is expressed, and the other half should not be divulged (D: 1933). In another place, Rumi is irritated by not being able to express it all. "I am drunk, I shall reveal the thousand-year-old secret . . . I shall

expose your secret, my patience has run out, more than this neither the cosmos nor the earth can bear my ache" (D: 1931).

The articulation of non-tangible Love, Shams-consciousness, and the supreme and formless experience of existence was a task that Rumi skillfully undertook with his words. Thousands of verses are dedicated to removing the obscuration of the mind, but then the rest of the practical exploration of *Love* in the second level lay in the whirling dance and music.

Samā': Dance and Music to Vibrate Love

Based on his Shamsian approach, Rumi went on to introduce a method for understanding the unthinkable Love: it was the experiential practice of whirling dance and listening to music (*samā'* or *listening*) as a means to vibrate the heart and consciousness for a continuous awakening and sighting of Love.

Physical gestures or movements (such as yoga) have long been part of spiritual practices in many cultures. The central goal of such music-dance exercises has been to enhance the power of the mind by gradually removing the distractions of sensory diversions and eventually removing the sovereignty of the body in favor of another level of consciousness (*fanā*, the state of non-self). The power of music and dance with an intention of meditation and removal of the mind's incoming and outgoing thoughts has been said to stimulate the dormant and subtle energy, or even subtly alter the physiology. Through auditory and physical stimulation, the consciousness roams around and moves deeper without inhibition to familiarize itself with a completely different realm outside of the conventional dimensions within time and space. So the dance and music are aimed at weakening the centrality of the body; the consciousness expands and the pure consciousness deeply buried in the mind is reached. This non-Islamic practice became a prerequisite for reaching an undivided consciousness.

Rumi's successors pursued the dance by creating a convent for the Mevlevi monks and designing a special white robe consisting of three pieces (one long layer with a short tunic and white pants), worn with a black cloak and a long cylindrical hat.[26] It is unlikely that the three pieces of white clothes were designed by Shams or even Rumi; different silk clothing of Rumi displayed in the Konya museum speaks against such a presumption. Shams and Rumi did whirl, but the Mevlevis' "Turkification" of the dance and music is from the Ottoman period. "According to Ekrem Işın, the practice of whirling was developing into a structured Whirling Dervish Ritual based on musical

compositions in the fifteenth century under the direction of Pir Adil Çelebi (1421–1460)."[27] Whatever the origin of their garb, the Mevlevis' historical choreographed dance (which goes back to Shams) and secularly composed Ottoman (Turkish) music adapted for a spiritual purpose is still officially performed once a year.[28]

For Shams and Rumi, music and dance were used to remove the veil of sobriety and didactic thinking. Apparently, it was during the whirling and while melodies were being played that some of Rumi's musical *ghazals* were composed. It seems there was a vertical pole in Rumi's house, which he held with one hand, leaned his body outward, and whirled around like a child playing.[29] During this whirling he composed his lyrics. Through the power of music and dance his mind became fluid and must have returned to the primordial state when there was no human body and nothing else but one existing force, the force of "Love," the formless force that made everything possible.

The transmutation of mind and heart was the goal. The fact that the practice was against the tenets of strict religious tradition never stopped Rumi from performing it. His writings about music and dance are worth considering here. So long as you are in your sober mind, remain vigilant; when you become intoxicated, then let go, let go . . . Once you begin the process, soar and come to dance . . . There is a point around which you need to whirl like a compass (D: 169) Where is the life-changing minstrel who with their shouts and recital which sent my head in a thousand directions? (D: 223) Do not sit and wait around with your draining thoughts; go where your companion is—dance is restlessly anticipating bringing you closer to your source of life (D: 338). *Samāʿ* brings serenity to those who find the source of their life, especially to those who have not experienced the essence of their existence (D: 2353). The purpose of *samāʿ* is to bring you closer to your heart; in such a state, musical instruments are only the means, and dancing in a circle around the *Kaʿba* is like a work equal to enjoying the two worlds (D: 339). It is clear that Rumi not only listened, but he was also familiar with the musical scales and which ones aroused a particular inner mood and longing (D: 457). Rumi also played several musical instruments, including the *robāb* (a narrow-necked lute, a traditional instrument of Khurāsān) (D: 457). He writes that his performance would enliven the dead, intoxicate the mind, and make the inner face of Love appear (D: 1857).

> Come in grace oh my life, the life given by each *samāʿ*,
> You are the splendid moon, brilliant moon, the splendid moon. (D: 170)

The dance of lovers results in being in the center of the sun and tasting its sweetness, while the dance of denouncers ends in disillusionment and decline (D: 1069, 1157, 2021). Listening to music is just the beginning, while it would afterwards become an internal listening (D: 1241, 1286). Rumi dedicates a number of complete *ghazal*s to *samā'*. Each of the *ghazal*s uses the inner and outer dance as an allegory, both to orbit around and at the same time to ascend the ladder of Love (D: 1295, 1296, 1832). Dance brings a message from what is hidden in the heart, and by it, a serenity emerges (D: 1734). Dance of the air, trees, and the whirling of existence, it is all "for You!" (D: 2157). Whirling is a search to reach the harmony and circle around the absolute reality (D: 1749, 1824). The effect of *samā'* is eventually supposed to set the experience of non-duality in motion. It would seem as if one has taken wine; the power of mind and all multiplicity would subside while the heart is merged with the One (D: 1987). The experience produced from whirling is the withdrawal of the senses, logic, and eventually the self. Through this process, another level of consciousness would have to emerge.

Love Is Non-Self (*bī-khwīshī* or *bī-khodī*)

In another method of understanding Love, Rumi lays out the idea of the non-tangible aspect of self, outside of the egocentric mind. He refers to this non-existing self as *bī-khwīshī* or non-self. In the process of attaining the knowledge of Love, the role of the logical intellect (*'aql*), with its five senses, is kept out (M: II: 374).

The non-self is well hidden within self; it is the non-material force of eternal existence living inside our impermanent and mortal body. Rumi's composition is a reminder not to go far from self. In fact, self is the guide to penetrate into non-self (D: 44). The coexistence and then the separation of the mortal from the immortal occurs at the time of death, or the death of ego (*fanā*) is when an enlightened mind can experience immortality (D: 246, 1825, 1875, 1938; M: III: 626). Rumi elaborates on the importance of non-self (*fanā*) as a prerequisite to liberation and subsistence (*baqā*) in the ultimate realm (M: V: 860–61). Being with the self and not knowing about the other self (non-self) is the mystery of existence; yet they are so close to each other (D: 174, 1515). It is a journey from self to self in order to find the eternal companion; to find the entirety of existence in self (D: 1142, 1244, 1246, 1247). Rumi often hints that the carnal body is an excuse and is not the true self. The true self cannot actually be called self; it is complete selflessness (D: 1263, 1459). The

branches of a tree are in motion because of the invisible breeze, not because of the tree (D: 1476). We are empty of our own force: the inner construction is not within our domain, it is from some other source—it is an invitation to become that source; to become non-self (D: 1553, 1711). Each breath is an opportunity to access either self or non-self. Breathing of selflessness by transcending the worrisome thoughts allows many wonders to happen—in fact the breath of selfhood is nothing but tension, sadness, and restlessness which take over one's existence (D: 323). Clever selfhood and "I-ness" (*manī*) slowly give rise to delusion (*vahm*), but "he who becomes selfless, all the selves are found in him" (M: V: 950; D: 2760). A sip of wine takes the being towards non-self (D: 2804). It is our non-self that we hide in our self (D: 2794).

The exquisite paradox about non-self is when Rumi probes to bring up the secrets, while the secret is held by non-self, colorless, signless, situated, and yet flowing, not to be found in either world, and unable even to be articulated—a hidden self in a visible body (D: 1759). In the absolute non-self, there is bliss because there is nothing but Shams (Love); the physical body will in due course become a prey to the intellect and the wind (D: 1688, 1689, 1693). The self is a body of water and clay, like the body of a donkey, an animal circumstance that puts the person through thousands of troubles until the inner truth is revealed—a kind of entity that cannot be framed with a name or place (D: 1585). Once the hidden treasure of non-self is unveiled, then that self becomes worthy of veneration and immortality (D: 2353, see also 2146). "Secretly you flow in my body, in my existence . . . o primal life before any life, place before all places . . . why should there be any being without you? You are the foundation of my four elements," (D: 1786)—the four elements that eventually disintegrate (M: III: 615). To find the state of selflessness is liberation (*bī-khwīsh show o rastī*) (D: 2583). All truth is found in non-self, *bī-khodī* (D: 2774). By differentiating the physical self and the non-physical self, true knowledge only penetrates into the non-physical. This mysterious self begins to surface through that knowledge as well as sending a continuous reminder about the temporality of the world and the body (D: 443, 1261, 1946, 1951). "Once the force of life is distinguished from the body, it re-emerges once more inside us." This way, this non-physical self is no longer a stranger to the consciousness—a true transmutation (D: 1826, 1254, 1855). Being in love, one cannot recognize self from others; this is to be a selfless lover (*'āshiq bīkhwīsham*) (M: III: 439; D: 2163); "In the garden of non-existence (*gulistān-e 'adam*), there is only non-self (*bī-khodī*)." (M: III: 546; D: 2170) To access the reality

of Love, one must die to one's trivial and fleeting ego and reinvent the mind in the realm of selflessness (M: V: 882). The clouds weaken the light and cause shadows on the ground; find *bī-khodī*, which has no clouds to cause shadows of confusion (M: V: 855–56). "The absolute existence produces only non-existence; what is the workshop of existence-producing other than non-existence?" (M: V: 916)

The experience of non-self divides the mind between a side that appreciates the world and the body, and a side that binds with the absolute truth from which the heart and (real) life are born (D: 1868). The created world is a launching pad from which to begin reconstructing the first cause of reality (D: 1919). The selfless reality is the highest state of existence. For Rumi, selflessness is the ultimate kingdom, so one should not cling to petty kingdoms that are doomed (D: 1162). Honoring one's ego harvests more distance with the real self, since ego is a stranger that one should avoid (D: 342, 429, 499).

Rumi may seem to take up two strategies to clarify the idea of the non-self or the real self. On one hand, he presents his case with non-self; on the other, with the divination of self. In fact, both approaches lead to the same outcome. The non-self (*bī-khwīshī*) is to avoid the ego (M: IV: 788). And when Rumi refers to either "we" or "I," "we are immortal" (*bāqī* or *jāvdānī mā'eem*), his imagery is referring to the real self or self-divination (D: r. 1220, 1222, 1261, 1299). In his suggestion of "I am this or that" (D: r. 1242, 1341, 1356, 1458), he is epitomizing Love and is speaking on its behalf (D: r. 1445). The best description of this twofold idea of non-self and self together is characterized in Rumi's own words in a *rubā'ī*, "I see it when I don't see myself" (D: r. 1514). The togetherness of self and non-self demonstrates the non-apparent Love and the fragment of it in one's visible body as evidence of the whole (D: r. 1566). Sometimes for the non-self, Rumi implies self-negation, as if everything is outside his conventional self and the non-self is the second entity, which he symbolically calls upon himself "you." The non-self experience is a cognitive experience of timelessness, a realm where a floating non-moving time exists outside of conventional time (M: III: 505).

Of course, the divergence of non-self and the ultimate self proves to be a consistent theme in Rumi's illustration. But as it philosophically appears, it is an unsettled issue between the Buddhist sense of *non-self* and the Vedantic/Upanishadic understanding of the *ultimate self*, in which there is no substratum of any kind in the former approach to self as compared with the latter. Rumi's non-self and self-divination are two sides of the same coin. The physical/intellectual self has to be overcome (in a process of self-annihilation) in order to reach the inner

core of one's universal existence (the ultimate and highest self as well as the impersonal self)—to know the secret of life.

> Disappearing in the world of disappearances is my religion,
> Non-existing in the world of existence is my creed. (D: 430)

CONCLUSION

Love, *Shams*, and *khāmoush* are the most important names used in the *Divan* for the highest, unfathomable, and hidden state of reality. The second level of the pyramid is the experience and the articulation of this formless state. These two levels are the key part of what Rumi wished to transmit. The visualization of these levels is central to understanding the work of the *Divan*. Contemplation, dance, and the withdrawal of the five external senses and the ordinary intellect (*'aql*)[30] are the methods that Rumi introduces in order to glimpse the formless reality of Love. The pairs of opposites and the imagery that Rumi uses throughout the *Divan* are mostly aimed at illustrating his central experience, which is outside of any opposing or dual pairs.

Chapter 5B

Rumi's Case against Dualistic Thinking and His Wisdom about the World

Level 3: The World of Dualism and Pairs of Opposites

Before expanding his discourse of non-dualism, Rumi had to use dualist concepts to bring to light and eventually reject the inner mechanism of the dual-thinking mind. By doing this, he demonstrated that the dualistic perception of the world—dividing aspects of the world into two opposite categories—is the natural product of the biological and physical world as well as the impulse of the mind. But this was only a step along the way: Rumi's goal still remained to point people to a non-dual state, the ultimate reality, a time before all became differentiated, dual, and plural. He was trying to describe something similar to the division of yin and yang and their non-dual state of Tao. In Rumi's writings, the major dualist divisions, apart from young-old, man-woman, day-night, and so on, are mainly between belief and disbelief, worshipper and worshipped, time and space, separation and unity. Rumi provides a framework for numerous examples; this chapter covers a few symbolic ones.

In his poetry, Rumi does not practically deny the dualistic realities of the world—night and day, male and female, religious believer and disbeliever, young and old, good and bad, up and down, east and west, and other dual aspects of life. But he extrapolates on the non-dual state of things from a supra-cognitive or meta-cognitive (even cosmic) point of view. For example, to demonstrate his

non-dual philosophy, Rumi frequently alludes to the demarcation of the sun's position as being linked to the cognitive perception of the viewer—the sun is described by us as being in the east or the west, up or down, rising or setting, since it is being viewed through the passage of time in human cognitive perception. But the sun itself does not recognize such arbitrary orientation from its own position. The human viewer, down below, has a fixed position on earth and is thus hostage to the transiency of time and place—one manifestation of dualism (see D: 1314, 1940). The sun's own position is a point free of day and night, a point in which the day and the night have equal status, a state of equilibrium. Rumi composed multiple poems about the sun to express his viewpoint of oneness by using the usual and conventional lens of human dualistic perception.

All the dualism of the world emerges from a non-dual source, but the non-linear world of dualities and multiplicity requires contemplative cognition, such as Rumi offered, to visualize the ultimate source without becoming entangled with the transient appearances of the phenomena. Rumi illustrated this concept with images that are easy to relate to. For example, he portrays rivers as being transient forms of their greater source, the source from which the river became separated and which it rushes to rejoin—the ocean. A cut reed, even though it becomes a flute, is still a reed plant; its song carries a tone of separation, longing for reunion with its root and true identity (the *Masnavi*'s first theme).

Rumi uses various angles and themes to take his readers deeper into their own minds and further back in time. In one poem, he envisions a fetus as not being aware of its gender, religion, and ethnic designation, which are all assigned arbitrarily by human cultures; whether this future human becomes a king or servant does not change the sameness of its human origin (D: 1466, 1573). From a realistic and psychological point of view, however, the differences surface. It is true, as Rumi points out, that a person becomes what he or she searches for and eventually experiences, whether devil, pure logic, water, fire, light, or Love; in this case of the external search, "one should not foolishly seek divine help." The gullible person is deceived by the causes of his situation instead of seeking the solution (M: V: 904–5, 924; VI: 1062, 1113). When it comes to the external judgment of ethnic and linguistic communities, Rumi leaves no room for discrimination, drawing the attention of narrow-minded people to the fact that all sperm is the same and colorless (M: I: 194–95). The differences are external, but the root of all things is the same.

By elucidating aspects of the world of differences, Rumi's deeper intention for his readers was to blend and mix the pairs of opposites in order to produce a new field of understanding through imagery, which he meant to point to the deepest immortal root of everything, undifferentiated Love.

Rumi saw the world of good and evil and the dualistic confrontation of prophets with unbelievers as the frictional interactions that would eventually lead to calmness, and would take communities and individuals out of the abyss of their dualistic mind and circumstances. In dealing with the reality of his own time and cultural circumstances, Rumi wrote many poems to address what seemed to be important for Muslims (and other similar religious communities), those who divided people between two strict categories of believers (*mu'min*) and unbelievers (*kāfir*) based on their faith in the God of Islam (the Semitic God). For Rumi to address this religiously inflexible and uncompromising dualism, he had to do it in a way that would not cause an open protest or harm people's faith. There are literally thousands of verses in which Rumi lays out the entrapment between belief and disbelief, sometimes overtly and other times allegorically. In his view, so long as this religious entrapment continued, people would be caught in the crossfire of religious dualism without experiencing any of the ultimate human essence: the supreme undivided domain.

In the dualistic world, Rumi shows no obsession with virtuousness and avoids taking sides with faith over infidelity, or good instead of bad, because of his transcendence of moral and religious conviction. To express oneness required freedom from entanglement with morality or religiosity. That was his goal. In his most elevated description of immutable and immortal Love, Rumi's sense of righteousness and morality is absent and he completely avoids preaching saintliness. He set himself as the example of one single belief, and that is Love:

> Through Love, the deserts of thorns have many times become gardens of flowers;
> By this confession my belief has been exposed a hundred thousand times.
> O you immortal Love, you beautified my dead body,
> So that you would liberate my existence to its oneness from this incarceration. (D: 29)

> If the fire of the heart rises and begets the believer (*mu'min*) and unbeliever (*kāfir*),

Their appearances will fade away as the bird of wisdom soars high. (D: 538)

The Dualism of Belief and Disbelief

Rumi realized that belief and disbelief were two of the most powerful and prominent examples of social dualism, and he used much of his energy trying to break down that dualism of belief and disbelief from different angles. Rumi also realized that the theme of belief and disbelief in God is inherent in the dogma of the Semitic religious traditions, with no alternative to its absolutist, right-and-wrong dimensions. As an antidote, Rumi focuses on chaotifying and displacing the conventional mind to dilute the dualism of belief (*īmān*) and disbelief (*kufr*), or believer (*mu'min*) and unbeliever (*kāfir*), in some of his best poetical allegories, as we shall see below. He does not succumb to the discriminatory themes of *kufr* and *īmān*, but tackles them with great poetical care. Poeticizing what Sanā'ī and 'Attār had already started on this topic provided the necessary license for Rumi to continue without fear of being accused of heresy.

Rumi takes his readers to the realm of absoluteness of light, of nonlocality, of non-self, of non-duality—a realm where belief and disbelief melt down and become meaningless—and finally to a realm where any dual thoughts are absorbed into the wholeness of Love, Shams, sun, and ocean. He writes: "The radiant light of the Universe has nothing to do with belief and disbelief." (D: 351) He adds, "In the fire of [Truth], belief and disbelief seem like two hollow straws" (D: 608). Similarly, he says, "Love's fire in the dispute between the believers and unbelievers burned down their war and peace as well" (D: 1331). Even more daringly, Rumi writes: "Until the time when all the traces of belief and disbelief are completely uprooted, give this wine cup of revelation to the unbelievers" (D: 802). Rumi searches for a realm that transcends binary religious dogma (D: 685, 2055).

Rumi warns, however, that in the path of Love, a great transformation can take place—in fact, "this path can transform a friend into an enemy, water into fire; a religious man can be pulled into the circle of disbelief" (D: 751). He uses disguised wordplay to reveal the power of Love's secret: "If I tell it to the faithful they all lose their faith instantaneously; if I say it to the unbelievers, there will be no more unbelievers left in the world" (D: 1025). Rumi's writing certainly does not lack for poetical and word rearrangements: "My disbelief is the mirror of your belief; o son, look carefully in the disbelief of belief (*kufr-e īmān*)" (D: 1098, 2189). *Sāqī* in the Persian poetical

metaphor is the cupbearer, and the female goddess of reunion. The wine she is visualized serving would prevent anyone, believer or unbeliever, from staying behind the veil of secrets—wine drinking is a time for confession of the truth; a time when "all the pious ones would have to become naked" (D: 1108).

In a different style, Rumi plays with words for these two notions, using the labels of "belief" for the path of Love and "disbelief" for the disdainful attitude towards Love. "How far you would go backward? Come forward, don't go on the path of disbelief; come towards our creed (*kīsh*)" (D: 120). Belief speaks so loudly that even if it may look like disbelief, it is genuinely belief (D: 140). Rumi conversely uses ironic allegories (perhaps addressed to pedantic religious scholars) that claim the path of Love is disbelief, not belief (D: 448, 608, 3162). At the same time, he cautions, if the realization of Love is attained, the whole saga of belief and disbelief becomes nothing but a tale of heresy (*kāfir-īst*) (D: 468). In defining another aspect of disbelief, on the other hand, to Rumi, *kufr* is not a derogatory religious label by coincidence; it signifies the ignorance of one's mind, whereas the real meaning of *kufr* is not *kufr* in itself (M: III, 471). M. Waldman also points out that the five hundred occurrences of this term in the Koran do not always have the same meaning, but instead the word's meaning shifts.[1] Rumi says, "*Imān* itself is a word but its meaning is not apparent" (M: V: 982). He pinpoints the real essence of humanity by saying, "Dealing with Love is believing in it, and since Love is in everybody, there is no such thing as disbelief" (D: 478). Rumi goes back and forth between calling his creed *kufr* and *imān* (D: 2113, 2162–63, 2166). Aflaki in once instance reports that Rumi, in a debate with Owhad al-Din, called he who disobeys his *sheikh* (spiritual master) *kāfir*.[2]

Rumi perhaps intentionally avoids locking the notions of belief and disbelief into fixed religious definitions, especially for those on the path of Love. He says, paradoxically, "Better to have confusion than clarity, better to have a stranger as company for the heart, better to have sour than sweet, better to have disbelief than belief" (D: 1845). "Belief is what Love stands for. We humans are symbols of disbelief; take a good look at disbelief and belief" (D: 1922). They may be a social reality, but the notions of belief and disbelief in the Rumian world are sheer human constructs, between which he tries to have his readers oscillate until the right moment to rise above them—and until the moment to comprehend his universalist and transcultural creed.

A fire burned down belief and disbelief
From the moment the creed of non-self began to spread.

Up and down filled like a sea,
The boiling springs appeared everywhere.
There appeared a realm of passionate lovers,
They entered your blazing field.
Every dawn before your magnificence,
Even the pure faith of Mohammad had to prostrate. (D: 2906)

Rumi emphasizes the importance of intuitive insight that sees the light (*dīdeh nur bīn-e man*), not the eyes that see only the surface of things. This is aligned with the idea of disbelief as a transient and superfluous phenomenon in the historical context, while belief is the foundation of the true self.

Disbelief is also, from an Islamic point of view, visualizing any image other than God. Rumi is a master of visualizing a female deity, the beloved whose beauty is so seductive that it brings disbelief of religion to the heart. He uses the metaphor of the hair of the beloved, and by visualizing such imagery, he falls into the territory of disbelief. The hair, as part of an image of a goddess, is a symbol of seduction, taking one away from a pious belief in God. Rumi takes this road, being seduced into leaving his belief for a reunion with Love—in the realm where one is no longer a vehicle of duality but becomes a believer in being one with Love (D: 1256, see also 1252, 1033). Rumi, impersonating the "viceroy" of Love, offers solace by unlocking the gate for the wandering unbelievers, "in my absolute kingdom, both disbelief and belief are my subjects." (D: 1374; see also M: IV: 791)

Rumi opens his heart by declaring that as long as the sun is his companion, it really would not matter if he exchanged his Muslim faith to become a pagan (*musalmān nīstam gabram*) (D: 565). He admits the fear of being Muslim (*tashvīsh-e musalmānī*) is keeping him back from expressing his veneration for its face—a state of consciousness that he is *qalandar*, *kāfir*, and *mu'min*, all the groups that he wished not to be identified with (D: 2603). The sun seems to be a source of transcendence and conversion: "The radiance of your sun will lighten the whole world; it turns poison into medicine and disbelief into belief." (D: 753)

Disbelief in Rumi's eyes also signifies attachment to the materials of this world. "When I learn about my veiled self and yet fall in love with the world, then don't call me a believer of Love—call me an unbeliever, my friend." (D: 1968) Elsewhere, he regards this physical world as a symbol of impermanency (*fanā*) and disbelief (*kufr*), so he finds a purpose for being in this world: "I am born in the heartland of

disbelief in order to attain belief." (D: 1400) Naturally, a purpose for the animalistic, aging body had to be sought (M: IV: 779–80; I: 62). In the following poem, the desirous body and mind are considered to be "disbelief" or "smoke," whereas an enlightened mind is "belief" or the "luminosity of the flame":

> The smoke of fire is disbelief, the light of its flame is belief;
> I try to secure the candle of my existence beyond disbelief and belief. (D: 1589; see also D: 26)

The primordial and immutable force of life, Love, is deep and veiled in human existence—a journey of an immortal with a mortal. One of Rumi's most expressive and moving *ghazals* speaks of this companionship, whose force has given him the life he has—a permanent life that he cherishes and wishes not to be apart from. The face of Love is his religion. In this religion, belief and disbelief have surrendered at Love's feet (D: 1805). In other poems, Rumi similarly writes:

> I become an unbeliever (*kāfiram*) in both worlds if Love stays as sweet as it is;
> The eye will only see belief if one's disbelief takes a sip from this cup. (D: 1819)

> O Shams the truth of Tabriz, whoever comes with the denial of the matter,
> Radiate the luring light of belief in his non-believing existence. (D: 2038)

Rumi moved away with abhorrence from the notions of disbelief and belief, conceptions endorsed by the religious classes whose minds were stuck in a moralistic and dogmatic perspective. He aimed towards a higher experiential attitude. His poetry moves above and beyond a moralistic conception of good and evil (M: III: 497), beyond religious discrimination against disbelief: "I have been a stone, a gem, a believer and unbeliever . . . There will be a day that I depart my condition and free myself from good and evil" (D: 1791). About the dualism of good and bad, he writes:

> Take into account that so long as Shams, the glory of Tabriz, is with you,
> Why should you panic about good and evil? (D: 3068)

It is we who have transcended the good and bad;
The submission [to faith] and skepticism can continue without us.
(D: 128)

Rumi could only provide a spiritual alternative to a biased religious history so riddled with the dualism of belief and disbelief[3] that bloody wars have been waged for it and conflicts among Muslims, Jews, and pagans have been created (M: III: 466). These wars, in the simple language of Rumi, are actually a war between one's inner halves, one antagonizing the other—a war that will continue until a reconciliation is sought for a smoother passage through life (D: 3132; M: I: 147; V: 850; VI: 1252). Relatedly, Rumi's idea of another dualism—heaven and hell—describes that notion as not just a religious idea but in fact the oscillation of a mind moving from its hellish into its heavenly side. But the movement into "heaven" occurs only if the mind is able to extinguish the flames of lust, aggression, and greed. To validate this point, Rumi attributes it to a prophetic anecdote (*hadīth*) (M: II: 342–43). In Rumian poetry, the promise of Paradise beyond seems elusive. Instead, the hint of paradise on earth is the idea of self-realization—opening both eyes, as Rumi turns around the Koranic verse promising water, milk, honey, and wine—and pointing out that all is to be found in oneself and the world (D: 1972; M: V: 901).

Against Other Dualistic and Pluralistic Concepts

"We are of one single essence in two bodies." (M: V: 919)

The human view of time is quite linear. Yet the very principle of undivided absolute has no spatial or temporal components. Rumi is steadfast about the subjectivity of past and present designations, declaring that in fact both are one single thing divided by humans (M: III: 461). "A hundred thousand years and one hour is one and the same [moment]" (M: I: 194; III: 461, 536). "Every moment we and the world are renewed against the unchanging permanence" (M: I: 72). Rumi's holistic and cyclical view of time is frequently identifiable in his poems, such as when he refers to the beginning and the end being tied together, in the curves along further curves, like an ocean without a beginning or an end (M: VI: 1065).

Oneness is the central condition of all things. The appearances are many; so are the disagreements about their origin. Rumi alludes to the world of plurality in many examples in order to clarify the

unchangeability and oneness of reality, despite the warring of the seventy-two nations over it (M: III: 477).[4] In another place, Rumi claims that aspects of all seventy-two nations are found inside a person (M: I: 184). Elsewhere, he writes, "The creed of Love is outside of the seventy-two nations' religions" (M: III: 629). In an interesting parable, he addresses how the religious and linguistic distances between human groupings could cause misunderstanding about the oneness of reality. The linguistic debate among a Turk, a Persian, an Arab, and a Roman over the correct name for grapes led to a serious, unresolvable quarrel because of their different languages and different words for the same thing. Each was thinking the other three were absolutely wrong. But Rumi points out that no matter what name it is given by different groups, grapes are always grapes[5] (M: II: 395). A person is father to one, son or brother to others; the deity is angel to one and Satan to another; the secret of this nameless principle is known to its source but concealed from others (D: 2072). In the same way, the secret of Love is one thing which, despite the differences in people's languages, can be understood outside of articulation (*khāmoush*) (D: 3052). "Human is concealed behind the tongue, the speech veils the true essence of our being" (M: II: 260). This is why Rumi genuinely prefers to have a companion with the same heartfelt longing rather than one who merely shares the same language (M: I: 75). Language is rendered irrelevant by Rumi in the knowing and telling of the secret of Love (D: 2207).

The conception of oneness by Rumi even takes into account the evolutionary process, and goes back to the time when water, then plants, animals, and humans emerged (M: III: 590–91; IV: 807–8). The diversity of the world, and even the food chain that seems to serve one species or another, is in fact a reflection of the bigger picture in which everything originates from a single source in the theater of multiplicity of the world (M: III: 406–7; III: 473). Even a mother, father, and siblings seem to have distinct identities, but in fact, they are all one entity, "just like the thousands of salt grains in a salt-shaker." (D: 3040)

Pure consciousness, once attained, transcends all dualistic and pluralistic thinking. Rumi invokes the name of Hallāj (d. 922), whose non-dualistic consciousness led to such famous utterances as "I am the Truth"—meaning there is no distinction between the worshipper and the worshipped—which became the grounds for his persecution for heresy. Rumi states that in Hallāj-consciousness, "One cannot distinguish between Omar [the close companion of the Prophet] and Abu Lahab [the uncle of the Prophet who rejected his prophecy]"

(M: III: 437–39). In Rumi's non-dualistic mind, there is no room for two things, a mind-set that he continues to develop for his readership (D: 2962, 2964; M: VI: 1119).

The Secret of Love Is Concealed

On the very first page of his *Maqālāt,* Shams recalls: "From the primeval past something has joined you and that is Love. The covering of Love appeared and wrapped itself around all things."[6] To Rumi, time-bound personal or religious beliefs of different sorts are like clouds that in each generation cover the sun, the absolute and permanent reality.

Rumi, like Shams, constructed this version of reality at the cost of being at odds with the religious thinking of his generation. Rumi even boldly states that the founders of the Sunni theological schools, which he and Shams belonged to by birth and training (Hanafī and Shāfei), could not come close to understanding the power of Love since they were too busy preparing religious precepts and *fatwas* (D: 499; M: II: 325). Rumi wonders if the theme of Love has been dealt with in Islamic theology (*dar kholāseh 'Ishq ā khar shī veh-ye Islam koo?*) (D: 2206), as even the positions of the early caliphs are at odds with Love (D: 2221).

All multiplicity is rooted in the non-differentiated Love; all is dissolved in the secret of Love. Rumi, in elaborating the enigma of Love, asks, "How does a dead seed gain life inside the earth? The earth's secret becomes apparent, yet it is hidden from sight" (D: 1121; M: V: 878–79). Human birth also stems from a secret source. To break into the sphere of ultimate reality—to become the monarch of permanent existence and break away from our worldly detention—requires absorption in Love, a conscious extinction of sensory stimulation, and complete death of the ego (D: 636). But Rumi cannot provide any explanation for what the secret of Love is. He suggests that you do not ask anybody about Love; instead, ask Love itself which, like clouds, showers you with its pearls (D: 1097). When the heart reveals certain secrets that do not come to mind, one must strive to understand the non-understandable (D: 2010). Love is drowned in Love, like the ocean, resting in its ocean-ness. "Through Love I have reached somewhere that even Love cannot know, a point where logic has also become paralyzed" (D: 905).

Rumi explains that the branches of a plant are lifeless if they are not connected to their roots, and are unaware of their hidden non-dual

source. He expresses this forgotten distraction of human life quite simply and realistically in these lines:

> If the part is separated from the whole it loses function.
> If any part of our body is cut, it turns necrotic.
> Until the time when the part is rejoined with the whole,
> It remains dead and is unaware of true life. (M: III: 499)

For those who doubt and have not yet been born to the reality of immortal Love, which is a veiled source of all multiplicities and branches of the tree of life, Rumi provides the following allegory: If a fetus still in the womb were told about the earth, with its abundantly beauteous mountains, oceans, valleys, and gardens, it could neither perceive nor believe it. Because the fetus has not experienced them, and is only accustomed to its familiar environment, it cannot agree with such a description of the orderly and splendid world (M: III: 408). In the same way, in the Rumian sense, the skeptics would find it equally difficult to understand the description of Love, which is so far beyond one's familiar environment.

Rumi views human beings, with their ability to be enlightened, as the spiritual rulers of the world and as "god." In one *rubā'ī*, Rumi points out that he is, of course, a follower of the Koran and Mohammad, and he would be distraught if anyone says otherwise (D: r. 1331), but that one poem is overshadowed by multiple other poems, including some *rubā'ī*s, which point to god being deeply hidden under the cloud of our thoughts. Rumi refers to the awakening power of human consciousness and the undivided perception that can be attained by removing the human body (ignorance) and god from the equation (D: r. 1220, 1222, 1239, 1242, 1299).

The absolute reality of Love is one and the same through and through, within time and beyond. This reality is never born, never dies, has no specific body, and has no specific place—all of which is beyond the conventional experience of mortals. Yet a fragment of this unborn, undying, incorporeal, and placeless entity exists in our mortal, temporal, physical body. Rumi presents the notion of *fanā*, or non-thinking and meditating self, which penetrates this realm of reality by ignoring sensory distractions. Immortal Love is *fanā*, and is also referred to as the friend who lives next door to us; thus, this immortal and invisible Love is the source of all existence. This source can be accessed in the consciousness when all stimulations and the centrality of body are diminished, a process by which enlightenment and immortality of Love can be achieved.

Once you spot *fanā*, the king of kings, then
The work of *fanā* is recognized to have made continuity (*baqā*) possible. (D: 131)

O Muslims, Muslims, what must be said about a friend
Whose appearance produces a hundred heavens out of a thorny weed? (D: 57)

So Rumi intended to constantly point to the ultimate undivided oneness of permanent reality. By his choice to treat the dual aspect of subject and object in the physical reality of phenomena, Rumi, unlike the Upanishads as they are conventionally interpreted, does not imply that the world is a complete illusion. Rumi was quite aware that the object and subject are impermanent and thus disappear, to be replaced by other dual things—a process that masks the source of all impermanency. The dualism of the world continues perpetually until its non-dual source is investigated and comprehended by the enlightened ones. In the mind of Rumi, there is an absolute state that is outside of space and time, hidden from the conventional intellect, and its unchanging permanency (symbolized by *sun* and *moon* through the passing centuries) is the basis of all impermanency and dualism (M: IV: 714; VI: 1169). His metaphor of *colorlessness* for the description of the absolute reality and the sun's rays reminds us that the optical interruptions by the emerging colors ("colored glasses") should not distort the source, which is colorlessness (M: V: 869).

As part of his paradigm shift having provided a glimpse of the source and limitations of dualism, especially religious dualism, Rumi moved one level lower to deal with the chaos of the world around him, addressing very human scenarios involving people's lives.

Level 4: The World and Its Affairs

Rumi knew the danger of getting lost in mystical and cognitive experiences without maintaining an awareness of the world and what people do and think. So Rumi dedicated some poems to addressing psychological and sociological issues surrounding the human mind and behavior, and this formed the fourth level of his philosophical pyramid. This level of Rumi's philosophical pyramid provides a sort of guide for human life in society. It also covers sociocultural aspects of human communities. On this level, Rumi addresses the mental components of people—negative (arrogance, hedonism, narrow scholarship, war, greed, different types of people whose psychic makeup

determines the outcome of the social realities) and positive (kindness, patience, knowledge, and wisdom)—and physical realities (food, time, and space).

On this level, Rumi also deals with concrete realities of life. To his mind, these matters are not mundane but instead are opportunities to move up the ladder of understanding until reaching the peak of the pyramid—the highest human evolution.

People throughout recorded history have constructed religions and worshipped deities almost without interruption. For Rumi, the reality of religions and those who adhere to them is undeniable. So his task becomes to soften the attitudes of the religious people and provide a positive slant to their religious thinking. Thinking inclusively, bringing into his *Masnavi* a number of prophetic names and anecdotes about earlier mystics and Sufis, alongside the Koranic stories or *hadīths*, Rumi intended to satisfy the former disciples, theologians, and Sufis in Konya; but he also gave the stories new twists, bringing in non-Muslims, non-Arabs, black Africans, and different linguistic communities, shedding more light on his non-self and on the final enlightenment.

Religion and religious concerns have always played a role in human life, which Rumi is far from neglecting. He uses his historical and scholastic knowledge as well as writing skills to open a channel of communication with the community of religious people, not only Muslims but people of other creeds. He omits none of the religions known to him, refers to great biblical/Koranic prophets including Noah, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Solomon, and Jesus (M: II: 263), and even mentions the Hindus (Sindhis) (M: II: 304–6), Buddhists (see next chapter), and Zoroastrians (fire-worshippers) (D: 2013, 2938). Rumi used the names of the biblical prophets both as characters in their own stories but also as metaphors, especially in the *Masnavi*. In the *Divan*, Rumi uses many of these names to relay a particular angle of Love and to draw the attention to self, while at the same time not rejecting the prophecy in popular belief. For those who only knew scriptures, Rumi used this deft strategy to make his case for Love more accessible and appealing to them. For example, he often used the metaphor of the story of Joseph to describe the beauty of Love. He used Moses to represent miracles, Solomon for linguistic and naturalist skill, Jesus for breathing on people to heal them, and Mohammad for the radiance that uncovers the hidden Love. These scriptural and popular allusions were linguistic tools for Rumi to render abstract Love into an understandable premise for religious people, but their inclusion has misled many into taking the whole body of metaphors

literally, as representing Rumi's own religious beliefs, which is untenable to maintain so many beliefs.

As was made clear in chapter 3, Shams disentangled Mohammad from the later Muslim empires and theology. Rumi took a similar position when he used the example of Mohammad to represent asceticism and spiritual ascension (*mi'rāj*). According to Rumi, Mohammad's search was for the truth; he did not aim to create an empire (as empire-building is not suggested in the Koran), or a theology that would discriminate between believers and disbelievers. This was a sensitive theme that left Rumi in an ambiguous position vis-à-vis the religious establishment. His use of religious stories and examples was intended to change or at least soften their linear and dogmatic interpretations. In interpreting a *hadīth* about Ali (quite appealing to the Shi'ites) to be "maulā," after Mohammad, Rumi cleverly emphasized the meaning of the word as *friend*, and reassured those who misunderstood the role of prophecy and its religio-political authority (he may have meant the Shi'ites). "*Maulā* or friend," referring to Mohammad (and all other prophets), "is he who liberates you and unchains your feet . . . for your happiness and freedom" (M: VI: 1233; I: 94). At the same time, Rumi admits the reality that each prophet and master created a distinguished creed, but all their teachings eventually will be dissolved in the oneness of the absolute truth (M: I: 174; VI: 1136). Rumi presented Mohammad and other prophets as trying to push away the transitory clouds of consciousness, so that the reality of Love could be seen without them covering the sun or the ultimate reality. In one *rubā'ī*, Rumi expresses this in simple words:

> It is we who practice the esoteric or exoteric way,
> Whether in Islamic, Judaic, or Christian array.
> Until our hearts find the true Love,
> It is we who change our path and belief every day. (D: r. 1325)[7]

Rumi's writings, apart from the "sociology of religion," deal with critical issues as well as philosophical questions that are still relevant to the everyday lives of human beings. The complexity of human behavior and its manifestations is captured in allegorical stories in his *Masnavi* and *Divan*. Some examples here shed light on Rumi's psychosocial approach at this ground level of his pyramidal philosophy.

One of the big philosophical questions that Rumi addresses is whether the world is created or is an eternal entity, always existing. In the fourth book of *Masnavi,* Rumi takes a position against both the creationist (predestination thinkers) and eternalist proponents.

He aims harsh sarcasm against those who have heard the story of creation from their parents and have wrapped it in their own foolish ideas (*hemāqat*), but actually have no evidence to prove their point, even as they argue that the world is impermanent and it has a creator behind it. Rumi himself wonders how the world has come into being from nowhere and whether it will go back to non-existence (M: II: 253, 282). The world has been the reason for chains of causes and effects[8] that will continue until the time when at last the primordial light is sighted and attained (M: II: 267–68). And these chains of causes and effects, Rumi believed, follow their course to become irreversible changes in the physical world (M: II: 283).

From those so-called eternalists who claim that the world is immeasurably old and has no creator, Rumi asks for proof, but proponents say that the proof of their claim is deep intuition, which cannot be substantiated with external verification. But Rumi reminds others that human perception covers only a very small portion of this grand cosmic revolution. He says that these philosophical speculations could be "burned away" over time without ever knowing the real answer. To make his point clear to the eternalists, he compares the long lifespan of a vulture with the short lifespan of a dove: many generations of doves come and go, each without witnessing the death of the vulture, leading the doves to believe that the vulture must live forever. In the same way, certain people perceive the world to be undying because they see neither the beginning nor the end of the world. Rumi expresses his annoyance with the people deceived by such outward appearances, and whose short-sightedness gives rise to ignorant ideas. Instead, Rumi invites them to ponder the inner mechanisms of this world which has produced us, small visible entities impossibly trying to figure out enormous questions of time and existence (M: IV: 770–73, VI: 1134).[9] By the same token, Rumi, in an allegorized fashion, jolts the human mind by saying, even though there seem to be no entrance or exit gates in this world, the entrance and exit are as following: one is born with closed eyes (asleep), one must find a happy way out in a wakeful state (open eyes) (M: V: 875–76). But there are certain people who would prefer a life without death so that they would indulge themselves in repetition, while they are challenged by others claiming that were there life without death, the world would not have the same worth. In both cases, Rumi blames the deceitful intellect (*'aql-e kāzeb*) for its dual thinking of birth and death (M: V: 906–7).

Rumi's position vis-à-vis the opposing schools of "free will" and "predestination" is crystal clear in an engaging discourse in his

Masnavi. He provides sound examples to demonstrate how natural free will is ingrained in human psychic makeup; it is an intuitive awareness and power that human beings enjoy while inanimate objects such as a piece of rock cannot. To Rumi, the believers in predestination deny themselves their own gifts of intellect and the right to exercise their common sense. Human free will, however, has its dark side if there is no decent and well-intended conscience (*dark-e vojdānī*) behind it and people irrationally blame external forces for their misfortune instead of their own misdeeds (M: V: 965–69, 970–71, 975–76).

Like anyone else, Rumi would have preferred to see sanity and moderation in society, but he was aware that this was not realistic. He takes the approach of addressing society's problems and providing guidance out of them. At other times, he is unrestrained in holding to account those responsible for the misery of the world. For example, Rumi scolds greedy people who use their arrogant voices to pursue their stupidity (D: 483). Pride largely becomes a hindrance in life; Rumi suggests that the solution lies in a selfless attitude (D: 453; M: V: 915). Boastful people are encouraged to leave behind their low-level habit of boasting for the sake of nobler actions and character (D: 383; M: V: 872–73). There are those who fail to see their own vices while constantly complaining about the lack of virtue in others, a behavior that limits their own growth (M: II: 261). Rumi had no illusions about human tendencies. He believed the unrestrained human ego and committing of inappropriate actions is a matter of opportunities in life; as both human wickedness and human virtue are often dormant (M: V: 852–53). In a sharp message to the moral warriors of religion and the ego-ridden people, Rumi points out that ego is interior; it has no blood to shed, so there is no reason to shed the blood of the body of non-believing people (M: V: 1005). Once the ego is dead, then the pagan should not be killed (D: 2051). Rumi considers ego a monstrous dragon compared to "small snakes" representing other smaller defects (M: I: 49–50). Unskillful means have led humans into tragedies by the lack of mastery over their own situations in life (M: IV: 675). When rushing into lustful and profitable pleasures, a tragic ending awaits, as allegorized in a lustful and shocking story in the *Masnavi* (M: V: 887–91, 999).

Rumi's sarcasm extends to those who, despite becoming knowledgeable saints and mystics (*'āref*), only focus on the nonessentials of life. Their knowledge is self-gratifying and they are like donkeys in their self-centeredness (D: 478). In another place, the narcissism of socially arrogant, studious adepts is elegantly captured in a tragically humorous story in the *Masnavi*: During a boat journey, a self-loving

scholar tried to carry on a conversation with the captain, who was not well-read. On every intellectual topic the scholar brought up, the captain remorsefully expressed his lack of knowledge. Finally, the scholar disdainfully told the captain that having studied so little, "half of your life has been wasted." The broken-hearted captain took the insult sourly. As the journey went on, a strong storm capsized the boat, and everyone was thrown in the water. The swimming captain saw the scholar struggling in the water and asked him if he knew how to swim. The scholar responded in desperation, "Don't ask me anything about swimming!" The captain retorted, "Ahh, *all* of your life is now wasted!" (M: I: 161). Here Rumi is emphasizing the importance of sensible and practical experiences of life, rather than only pedantic book-learning.

From Rumi's point of view, the conventional intellect alone (*'aql*) only takes a person so far and so deep in life; it is far from sufficient to deal with the essential existential matters of life and its riddles. The intellect is metaphorically stigmatized in Rumi's poetry. However, he also recognizes that the natural, untainted intellect can be used in its highest mode of cognition to perceive higher matters such as Love, in contrast with using a fraction of this intellect for the banalities in life (M: II: 331, 374; III: 479–80; IV: 703; V: 844–45). *'Aql* in a positive sense stands as antidote to human greed and ignorance, and acts as an internal and intuitive judge of potential consequences in life (M: V: 921; VI: 1116). Elsewhere, he values intelligence for the external awareness, whereas the quintessence of existence and its understanding is interior (D: 335), a pre-eternal intellect that humanity has been oblivious to (M: IV: 808), or as he calls it *'aql-e 'aql* the intellect of the intellect ("the real observer"), awareness of the mind (M: III: 525–26). "The Universe is a parasol and Sultan is the Perfect Intelligence, *'aql-e kull*" (D: 2677).

Profound and far-sighted social advice is also part of Rumi's experiential approach to life. All decisions and actions in life have their beginning, middle, and end. There are those who see only the beginning, and then there are those who more wisely reflect on the end even before it arrives: "He who sees the end of anything from the beginning, at the end will not be remorseful nor be in despair" (M: I: 77; III: 484; IV: 715).[10] Rumi advises that consultation with others on important decisions is not sufficient by itself; the final solution lies in doing the opposite of what one's ego dictates in the mind (M: II: 329). He warns against the danger of the mind drifting away in mental entanglements (*khīyālāt*), each time about something trivial and passing (M:II: 250–51).

Rumi insists on friendship and unconditional kindness for curbing the dark side of human behavior arising from all directions (D: 388; M: II: 294). Yet there is a malignant sort of kindness arising out of blind love or ignorance, allegorized in a story of a bear who with a stone smashes the head of his friend while trying to kill a stubborn fly so that his friend could sleep in peace (M: II: 322). Rumi believes that compassionate and wise people do know more and care about those who are unaware of their own state (M: III: 575). He assigns to the virtue of "patience" a great deal of weight in life: one of the greatest magical (*kīmīyā* = alchemical) powers of humans is attained through the exercise of patience in life events (M: III: 495; II: 248–49). For a natural healing of the body and mind, quoting a prophetic *hadīth*, Rumi advises one to expose the skin and body to the spring breeze, as the breeze benefits the body in the same way it does the trees and plants. He also recommends roaming in nature and gardens without clothes in the spring (*dar bahārān jāmeh az tan barkanīd, tan berahneh jāneb-e golshan ravīd*) (M: I: 120).

An example of Rumi's psychological insights about people is his warning not to fall for the façade. Intentions and actions should not contradict each other (M: V: 835). Rumi warns that a good appearance does not necessarily indicate good character. Laylee's lack of splendid beauty was not a consideration for her lover, Majnoon, nor can the shape and condition of a jug determine whether the content is poison, honey, or wine—only an insightful eye can discern it (M: V: 979). Rumi elaborates further that human gestures have always masked intention, which can create confusion, especially when certain ones are kind outwardly but are enraged in their mind. "O kings, we have killed the external aggression. But worse than the external is the inner aggression, which continues to linger." (M: I: 85; I: 131; see also IV: 790; V: 1014). "A true man is measured at the time of lustful greed and anger. I seek such a man; where is he, tell me?" (M: V: 961; II: 291, 315). In the same context, Rumi reminds his religious readers that while the external impurity of a person can be washed away by water, it is the inner impurity that remains and increases (M: III: 506; V: 832–33).[11]Any impure place would become pure through the power of truth and purity of the heart; exemplified in a poem when Mohammad was holding a discourse with his wife Aisha (M: II: 383).

In the fourth book of the *Masnavi,* Rumi, whether out of social realism or even cynicism, divides human psychosocial behavior into three general categories, basing this classification on a prophetic *hadīth.* He says that even though humans have similar physical appearances, in their dispositions they have evolved into three distinct communities:

At one end, there is a community of "Jesus-like" people who have transcended lust, controversy, and aggression, so well-behaved it is as if they were not born from the human race. On the other end of the spectrum, there is a community of "donkey-like" people filled with instinctual habits and a sense of self-absorption. The third community is composed of those who have inherited half of their characteristics from the animalistic world, and the other half from the higher and virtuous realm; it is a community of mentally divided humans who are in constant struggle for their true identity and in search of a balanced destiny (M: IV: 706–8).[12] Rumi uses the analogy of the leaves on the trees for different types of human beings: They may seem similar externally, but the fruits they bear are very different from each other. However, above all, there is one inescapable commonality for all of humanity, and that is death (M: III: 573).

Rumi's views on war and peace are clearly reflected in the beginning of the sixth book of the *Masnavi*: "If you look at the world as a whole, it is a series of slow-paced wars of religion against irreligion." From caliphs to emirs to sultans, they have, according to their own terms, led armies in the name of Mohammad to spread Islam and their own rule.[13] Rumi, similar to Shams, opposes those who justify their own politics by declaring holy wars for bringing the words of God to the infidels. Rumi rebuffs the iconoclastic and conquering wars, and says no war is necessary; the "sword of oblivion" deadens us (M: I: 131; I: 206, 208). Rumi sees a major internal human reason for this external war, and he goes on to say that this is an inner personal war with oneself: "Look at the countless wars within yourself; why are you busy fighting others? . . . Colorlessness is the basis for all colors; the principle of peace is thus what follows all wars." (M: VI: 1028–30; I: 211). This deeply held insight could not easily become hostage to the transitory affairs of this world, including religious accounts of war divinely justified—Rumi always kept Love as his measuring stick. Rumi's standing on war is sometimes misperceived with the help of a frequently quoted poem that has been read as suggesting that Rumi endorsed holy wars. The poem reads: "The obligation is war and glory in our religion, in the same way that in the religion of Jesus, refuge is in the caves and mountains." (M: VI: 1050). However, this quote is taken out of context and is, in fact, part of a poetic story and debate between a bird and a hunter.

Rumi shares his experiences of war and the loss of his own country (Balkh) to soothe those who are constantly disturbed by wars and politics. He believes it is futile to feel despair because of politics and war; buried in the heart is a more abundant treasure to explore than

a country or possessions one was attached to and lost. He says: if the Tatar warmongers destroyed the physical buildings, why should one be distressed when the treasure inside you is only discovered in the oblivion of rubble? (D: 1327)[14] Rumi's so-called patriotism and love for the homeland is not about barren lands or replaceable buildings; his patriotic allegiance goes straight to the principle of the immortal realm of enlightenment (M: IV: 739–40; D: 2000). Shams also rejected the prophetic *hadīth* interpretation of "love of homeland."[15] About the notion of patriotism, or the love of physical geography, Rumi invites his readers to reinvent themselves by unlearning the love of buildings. Numerous times in his writings he refers to "treasure [that] is only found when the old construction is uprooted" (M: IV: 746, 756; D: 141, 308). However, on the topic of geographical awareness, in one *ghazal* he writes eloquently of different regions and cities of Central Asia (D: 420), as well as the geographical division between Iran and Turan (the Sino-Turkish world), perhaps inspired by Firdousi's *Shāhnāmeh* (D: 1902, 3170).

As a sage and social philosopher, Rumi wants to refine the human understanding of social realities. On deeper issues, at the same time, he does not neglect phenomena even as fine as humanity's illusion (M: III: 608) of time and space:

> When a cruising ship passes by the shore,
> From on board it appears that the trees move with the shore.
> In fact, it is we who pass through this unmoving world,
> But erroneously we assume the world definitely passes us by. (D: r. 794)[16]

Nor does Rumi ignore the human mood and judiciousness—the time of hunger is painful and when one indulges in food one suffers from sloth—or how eating too much makes human life despicable and how eating too little food benefits the mind by requiring it to exercise its sharpness (M: V: 907, 925; D: r. 1679).

Rumi's *Masnavi* not only includes social matters and anecdotes but has historiographical elements as well. It relates historical events such as the eighth-century attempt of Abu Muslim (d. 755) to overthrow the Umayyad Caliphate (M: IV: 716), many anecdotes about Umayyad caliph Mu'awiya, especially in the second book of *Masnavi*, and the story of the twelfth-century Khwarazm Shah's[17] (d. 1193) conquest of the city of Sabzevār (M: V: 862–65). *Masnavi* even includes fantastical stories such as the one in which the Hellenic physician, Galen, out of curiosity about the future of the world, symbolically agreed to

live a compromised life: half of his body inside a mule, and half outside to observe the world until its end (M: III: 593).[18]

There are additional themes in Rumi's guide to human life and society that need future treatment in the context of his philosophical pyramid. Despite the great spiritual, philosophical, and social task that Rumi undertook, he did not escape his generation's cultural and religious attitudes towards women and their role in society.

One inadequacy for which we cannot really hold Rumi liable is his misogynistic attitude. For his generation, the place of women was always at the margin of the society. On the one hand, woman is deified: she becomes the beloved and the medium of union for enlightenment; on the other, she is discriminated against (the same dual role of female can be observed historically in the Indian tradition). Rumi quotes the Prophet of Islam on not consulting with a woman even if she is an ascetic master "and on how a woman mimics man's temptation." (D: 446, 1845, D: r. 182; M: I: 140, 150; II: 329; IV: 712; V: 940–41, VI: 1200–1201, 1222) Shams had similar ideas about women, as reflected in his *Maqālāt*.[19] Similar difficulty vis-à-vis the role of women is seen across religious traditions. Buddhists, despite the Buddha's outpouring of sermons regarding help for all sentient beings, even non-humans, have not yet successfully resolved the status of women in their monastic structure. The gender issue continues to objectify women in many religious and spiritual traditions, perhaps because those who place women at the margins or in subordinate roles are satisfied with the status quo.

Regardless of whether Rumi's ideas and anecdotes were original or came from other sources, he is adamant about sharing a comprehensive philosophy. But the interpretations of the *Masnavi* by scholastic thinkers have masked Rumi's wider philosophy of universalism, non-dualism, and enlightenment, as well as his social understanding. Rumi, however, can be held fully responsible for the exhaustive expansion of thoughts and beliefs in his poetry. The redundancy, pedantic inclinations, and even profanity contained in it nonetheless belong to his most comprehensive philosophy,[20] which he wrote to appeal to the wide spectrum of populations who have read and will continue to read his poetry. In fact, his use of profanity, similar to Shams, may very well be in having wished to descend from the role of an infallible saint, and wanting people to view him as an ordinary person like themselves.

Rumi has written much more about the world and its affairs. But to bring this chapter to an end, we rely on his wise remark: "Enough! Use your speech less; write less. The notebook of life and its destiny should be sufficient." (D: 514)

CONCLUSION

Despite the attention that Rumi gives to worldly human affairs, he continuously points to the tip of the pyramid—the source of all affairs and the impulse-giving phenomenon, Love. The trajectory of his philosophy actually begins at the lowest (fourth) level and goes to the highest. This even though we have begun the discussion of this pyramid from top down, from the highest point of Love, Shams-consciousness, and silence, to attainment of the highest point through non-self, dance, and visualization, all the way to dualistic conceptions, and finally dealing with worldly affairs. In fact, to understand and practice Rumi's philosophy, one would need to start from the ground or social level and progress upward until the enlightenment of the non-dual world is realized. Regardless of philosophy, though, Rumi's advice is to stay connected to the root of existence and be reminded of the permanency of the ultimate reality, rather than becoming entrapped either with trancelike states or with the petty realities of the world around.

In conclusion, to be able to glimpse what this great sage developed leads us to appreciate Rumi both as a philosopher[21] in his own right, and as the carrier of Shams' legacy. Although his philosophy has not been established to the same extent as Taoism or Buddhism, Rumi has emerged as one of the most admired gurus of modern times. His teachings still deserve to be delved into and appreciated as a philosophy, not just as sentimental esoteric interpretation.

Chapter 6A

Rumi, Vedanta, and Buddhism

Delight and Difficulty!

Before delving into studying the parallels among the philosophical outlooks of Rumi, Vedanta, and Buddhism, it is worth mentioning that social scientists—anthropologists in particular—have generally been more interested in studying the *differences* and cultural distances between human cultures. But today's global circumstances have created a more compelling responsibility than ever before to study the *similarities*. This shift has brought with it the welcome possibility of better understanding the similarities and interactions of people and cross-influences among cultures. It is hoped that such studies will also further our understanding of the field of consciousness, by assessing the similarity of mystical experiences stemming from the underlying web of human universal consciousness, in the transcultural search for the ultimate reality. The interconnectedness of mystical-philosophical experiences also relates to new areas of scientific awareness in the fields of astronomy, theoretical physics, and parapsychology.

As much as it is a delight to point out similarities and study the parallels between different traditions and philosophies, it is also a crisis of scholarship that we are unable to catalogue the similar definitions of *god* or *ultimate reality* using a unified classification, especially if they originate from completely different cultures. Nevertheless, the new intellectual directions of our time are more directed at discovering the commonalities of the human species and the common denominators that have been used to express the deepest human experiences.

INTRODUCTION: SOME INTERMINGLING OF INDIAN AND MUSLIM MYSTICS

The taboo against, and more importantly the stereotyping of, the Indian religious and spiritual-philosophical traditions in the Muslim societies have throughout the ages kept most Islamic adepts away from learning about them, and even those who did learn about them from mentioning them in their writings. Even though when some Indian fakirs traveled in the Afghano-Iranian world, interchanges of ideas and cross-influences did occur in practice between them and the Muslim mystics and philosophers, the Indian names and systems of thought remained unmentionable in Islamic writings. The origins of some of the practices, or at least their similarities to Indian spiritual practices, have only recently been mentioned in certain academic studies. It goes without saying that the presence of the Sufi Muslims in the Indian subcontinent has exercised its socio-cultural and spiritual influences.

The great eleventh-century astronomer and polymath scientist Abu Rayhan al-Bīrunī—one of the earliest scholars in the Islamic world[1] to study Sanskrit—impartially studied and published his comprehensive work on the Indian religions, especially Patanjali Yoga. Bīrunī's genius and the knowledge required to compare various Indian systems of philosophy with Sufi, Greek, Christian, and Manichaean systems have been considered unequalled.[2]

Bīrunī wrote about the Muslim ignorance of other people's religions and intellectual traditions, especially the ones from India, which had been suppressed because of religious dogma and deceptive stereotyping. Not liking the malignant lies about other religions, Bīrunī gave five psychosocial reasons for such deceptions and perpetuation of lies in the Muslim world: to benefit one's nation and family; liking or hating a class of people outside one's own by obligation; for profit or simply being afraid of telling the truth; because one's nature is deceitful; or because of one's ignorance and blindly repeating what others have said.[3] Until the lie is eliminated, Bīrunī believed, the inventor of the lie would remain a conduit to sustain the ignorance of his audience. Bīrunī even used a Koranic verse to warn those Muslims who would lie to their audience: "Speak the truth, even if it were against yourselves." (*Sura* 4:134)[4] For doctrinal and authoritarian reasons, the dogmatic preachers and theologians of Islam (like their counterparts in other religions) wished for no knowledge of what they perceived as non-believer religions to reach Muslims. Bīrunī himself experienced an absurd scenario when his invention of a tool to calculate the time

of the day and time for prayer was turned down by the imam of the mosque in Ghazni on the grounds that it had been handed down by foreigners (non-Muslim Greeks). Bīrunī responded with disdain, saying: "It is an idiot who does not allow the use of scientific inventions because they have been handed down to us by strangers. The Greeks walk and eat like us. So it is necessary for us to give up walking or eating because the Greeks do the same thing."[5]

The tolerant cultural conditions of the eighth through ninth centuries, before the rise of the iconoclastic and religiously intolerant Saffārid and Ghaznavid dynasties, not only allowed wandering ascetics to interact with Buddhist, Śaivite, and Manichaean monks, but also provided a medium of inter-borrowing and teaching in eastern Iran and Khurāsān. According to the account of *Faḍā'il-i Balkh* (composed around 1214), Abu Mu'ād Khālid (d. 814) (a contemporary of Shaqīq Balkhi) is reported to have openly taught *kufr* (non-Islamic doctrine), for which he was forced to leave Balkh for Tirmīdh and later Ferghāna.[6] There were even those such as Šaddād b. Hakīm who in their teachings rejected religious piety and endorsed more of an internal awakening; some of these individual mystics visited India and Central Asia, including Najjār ad-Darīr (d. 1117), who wrote about it (*Da'wat al-hind*).[7]

The earliest hint about *advaita* Vedanta and its intermingling with Islamic mysticism is the renowned Bāyazīd's (d. 874) expression of some non-dualist notions. Some have held the opinion that Bāyazīd's master, Abū 'Ali Sindī, an Indian (Vedantist) who apparently converted to Islam, may have been responsible for his disciple's unconventional Vedantic-Buddhist learning and pronouncements.[8] The expression *Tat Tvam Asi* in Upanishadic tradition alludes to a spiritual perfection and state that is philosophically expressed: "I am the finest essence of that truth, called 'this'" or "I am that"[9]—a practice that is believed to have found its way from Upanishad and Vedanta to Islamic mysticism via Bāyazīd.[10] In a psychological parallel, god-consciousness could be the same as the *nirvanic* state,[11] empty of one's self and all instinctual desires. Bāyazīd's utterances "unmistakably" echoed those of the Vedantic, particularly Upanishadic, declarations:[12] "I am Allah" (*anal-Allah*) and "How majestic is my state!" For thirty years, according to Hujwīrī (d. 1077), he dedicated his spiritual life to practicing self-mortification.[13] Until then, an ascetic declaring he was "god" was unknown in the Islamic world. In Islam there was no parallel to the Upanishadic *Brahman* as the impersonal god.[14] Bāyazīd, having liberated his mind, declared that he was in possession of the divine secret and exempt from the prophet's laws.[15] Bāyazīd's Vedantic utterance,

"I sloughed off my-self as a snake sloughs of its skin, and I looked into my essence and saw that 'I am He,'" is attested as an Upanishadic analogy.[16]

Bāyazīd has been a subject of debate among several Orientalists for mystical utterances that paralleled those in the Indian Patañjali's *Yogasutra*, in which rigorous yoga combined with meditation aimed to reach the highest perfection of self. In 1946, Martino M. Moreno published the detailed and interesting article "Mistica musulmana e mistica indiana," and in 1960 Robert Charles Zaehner published the book *Hindu and Muslim Mysticism*. Both authors argue that certain early Sufi experiences, as well as Bāyazīd's experiences, were influenced by an Indian system of philosophy as well as by Buddhism. Moreno points out that the Buddhist influences on Bāyazīd should not be ignored.[17] Moreno and Zaehner, however, emphasize the influence of Indian Vedanta more than Buddhism on Bāyazīd's spiritual formation. However, R. A. Nicholson would like to attribute the spirituality of Bāyazīd to Gnosticism and pantheism, which was prevalent during Sassanid times.[18]

Outside of theory, Bāyazīd's harassment in and eventual expulsion from his hometown was a practical manifestation of the conflict between the ascetics of the time and the theologians of Islam. Despite these disagreements, most of Bāyazīd's statements were equated with intoxicating mystical states and justified within the Islamic context of *miʿrāj*, the prophetic nocturnal journey to heaven,[19] but in fact they meant attaining enlightenment, as Rumi, in defense of Bāyazīd, also asserts in his poetry (M: IV: 734–76). Surprisingly, none of the later Islamic theologians seems to have objected to this experience and its articulation as blasphemous. 'Attār (d. ca. 1220) writes of this nocturnal journey in his *Tadkarat ul-Aulīyā* (Biography of the Saints) that Bāyazīd recounts, "I became awakened and all that was hidden became known to me . . . I used the eye of the truth. The whole time He was worshipping me not I. I had assumed I was worshipping Him . . . but I was ripped from my selfhood and was given another existence . . . all my impulses and worldly ego (*nafs-i 'amāre*) left me. I was then crowned with virtues."[20] Since Bāyazīd's internal experience of ascension (*miʿrāj*) is so similar to the *nirvanic* experience of the Buddha, Zaehner has also pointed out the resemblances between certain sayings of Bāyazīd and a Buddhist text (*Udāna*).[21]

It was the famous Sufi of Baghdad, Junayd (d. 910), who actually converted Bāyazīd's mysticism and brought his and all the other eccentric mystical practices to a level that was more conventional and

unthreatening to Islam, which would not contradict *hadīth* jurisprudence, the Koran, and conformist spirituality.[22]

'Attār also provides accounts of the experiences of other mystics after Bāyazīd. For example, Abul-Hassan Kharaqānī's (d. ca. 1033) original words in articulating his highest spiritual experience are epitomes of the *nirvanic* state or *mokşa* —an expression of union with the highest reality and non-dualistic state. "I longed for the Supreme to render me the way I truly am. I was then shown to my true self. As I saw myself asking, 'Is this real me?' the voice said 'Yes'; then I asked, 'Why has there been much fluctuation in my state?' The voice said, 'They are your other selves and this is your true self' . . . as I had a sighting of my existence, my non-existence surfaced. As I saw my non-existence, my existence opened the way to the gate of non-existence." Kharaqānī continues to articulate the knowledge of his true and empirical self in a well-composed state of mind. "I am a taster but I don't exist; I am a hearer but I don't exist; I am a speaker but I don't exist . . . People fast during the day and pray during the night hoping to reach 'home' and I am home for myself, . . . I shall obliterate heaven and hell." Kharaqānī's awakened state continues with words uncommon to Muslim ears: "Ka'ba moved around me, the angels prayed to me, I saw a light in which the highest truth loomed magnificent in the center; I attained the path of the truth as I left myself." "The dervish is he whose heart is clear and whose mind is without worries; he speaks but has nothing to say and he is free from happiness and anxiety."[23]These "heretical" utterances of Kharaqānī should not be mistaken as something stemming from scholastic Sufism.

Among all the mystics during the Islamic period, Mansur Hallāj (d. 922) stands out for his boldness and cross-cultural intermingling. He continued the declaration of "I am He"; he actually travelled to India and may have imported certain Indian spiritual notions that put his life at risk in Baghdad. Whether Hallāj really made a conscious effort to introduce certain Vedantic, yogic, Buddhist, and Manichaean ideas to the Islamic world is not certain; there is only circumstantial evidence. Born in Fars, south of Iran, Hallāj wandered and preached in Khurāsān, where he used to dress in soldier's uniform, until he travelled to India and Turkistan around the years 903–905. Upon his return, he was wearing an "Indian loin-cloth round his waist and a piece of patched and motley cloth thrown around his shoulders."[24] 'Attār tells us[25] about Hallāj's years of travelling to Khurāsān and Central Asia, an experience that later in his life drew him to India,[26] China, and Turkistan. Upon his return, he talked about the secret

teachings and acquired the name of '*Hallāj al-asrār*' (Hallāj, the carrier of the secrets).

In the regions he visited, including the eastern Iranian world, Gujarat, and Sind, he came across Manichaean, Buddhist, and Brahmanical populations.[27] Upon his return to the Islamic lands, Hallāj upheld the belief in *hulul*, or divine incarnation in the human soul, and expressed ideas among which the most radical of all was *ana'l-Haqq* (I am the absolute Truth). This and other ideas he held brought him into conflict with the religious conformists, especially in the city of Baghdad. Because of his trip to India and Central Asia and his eccentric ideas, certain free thinkers of the Mu'tazila school considered Hallāj to belong to the school of "light" and "darkness" of Manichaeism.[28] Ibn Nadīm (d. 998) wrote that Hallāj claimed to know alchemy (which he may have learned in Central Asia and India) and something about every science, but that he lacked the basic knowledge of the Koran, *hadīth*, and laws of Islam, and maintained contact with people who would say prohibited things against Islam.[29] Hallāj has been claimed as a Sufi by generations of later Sufis, but during his lifetime he had differences with Baghdad's conformist Sufis.[30] He seemed rather to have combined many mystical, philosophical, and religious concepts he had learned in India, Turkistan, and Khurāsān. Some modern scholars say that Hallāj's ideas about the unification of self in its highest form stemmed from Indian Vedanta and yoga.[31] But the range of his ideas also covered Sufi notions of Love ('*ishq*) and perfect Love (*mohabba*), as metaphors for having been awakened to an extraordinary reality of things.[32]

When Hallāj was arrested, the multiple charges against him included apostasy; he was eventually executed by the authorities because of the sociopolitical intrigues against him and similar figures who were seen as a threat to conventional Islam. 'Attar came under Hallāj's influence despite the Sufis' mixed feelings about him. 'Attar said this about his own spiritual exhilaration and that which Hallāj experienced: "The same fire which had fallen into Hallāj—has also fallen into my life."[33] After its religious reform, the Naqshbandi Sufi order considered Hallāj's and Indian Vedantic ideas dangerous to the Islamic system of thought.[34] The eighteenth-century Qādirī Sufi, Shah Ināyāt Shahīd, asserts that the links between "Hallajian philosophy" and Indian Vedanta were upheld by 'Attār and Shams Tabrizi, as reflected in Sindhi poetry, and that it was for this reason they both were killed by the jealous mullahs.[35]

Sufi interest in the Indian spiritual schools peaked from the sixteenth through nineteenth centuries, during the Mughal period. This

period was a fertile cultural medium for externalizing many cross-influences. Certain Sufis of India during this period would openly praise Lord Krişna using the words of the *Bhagavad Gita*, or even compose poems compatible with Vedanta or Bhakti Yoga.[36] (Even in Iran, the great Safavid-era mystic and philosopher, Mīr Findiriskī (d. 1640), believed in the divinity of the Vedas.[37]) The Mughal prince Dārā Shokuh (d. 1659) made a revolutionary and courageous effort to openly merge the Vedanta philosophy of the Upanishads with Sufism—an effort, however, that was perhaps rooted in the past.[38] Dārā Shokuh, a mystic as well as a didactic thinker, not only attempted to merge the two mystical "oceans," as he put it, and unite the Muslim and non-Muslim experiences in their highest mystical quest, but also meticulously compared and described the conceptual similarities between Sufi ideas and those of the Vedic and Vedantic (Upanishads) spiritual practices.[39] But not too long after his translation of fifty Upanishads from the Sanskrit into Persian and his reunification attempts, his fanatical younger brother Aurangzeb accused him of apostasy, had him executed, and usurped the throne of his spiritually pioneering older brother.

Intermingling and cross-influences between the mystics of the Islamic and non-Islamic groups continued on different levels and in different places. Whatever infiltrated into the practices and writings of one or the other has gone largely undetected, either because of the religious fear of expressing it, or because sometimes the indirect transmission of influences meant there was no precise memory of the original source.

The intermingling of Central Asian and eastern Iranian mystical groups with the Tibetan or Indian Tantric, Buddhist, or Vedantic elements may have become an indirect means of transmission of those elements to future generations of spiritual seekers and poets. Among these, Rumi stands out. Both Rumi's ideas and Shams' whereabouts before meeting Rumi deserve a more thorough investigation in the future.

The Parallels of Rumi with Vedanta and Buddhism

It is difficult to describe in words the content of the non-conceptual experience of enlightenment that the schools under discussion variously call the "One," "Emptiness," "Non-Self," "Brahman," "Śiva," or "Love."[40] There are linguistic distinctions but perhaps not experiential ones. Rumi's goal was also to describe the experience of

enlightenment. Enlightenment, in Rumi's discourse, means understanding the undifferentiated aspect of Love out of which everything derives its existence. It also means defying the dualism of subject-object, and defending the notion that the true nature of everything is pure consciousness, or even that enlightenment can be experienced in realizing the permanency of reality behind all impermanency. The crux of Rumi's views is that the heart is the compass and Love is the deepest and highest reality, while our body and conventional intellect are transient means for tasting existence only superficially.

In this and the next chapter, the task is to compare Rumi's non-dualistic approach to Love with the non-dualism of *advaita* Vedanta and Kashmir Shaivism, including links with Shaivism's Tantric beliefs and practices. Then the non-self philosophies of Buddhism and of Rumi are compared. Other parallel concepts to be examined include the definition and the experience of *nirvana*, immortality, veneration of a female deity, devotion to the guru, and apperceptions of ultimate reality. Despite their origins in different eras and some philosophical differences between these schools and Rumi, these are strong and living traditions that share underlying similarities and a number of important parallels. To introduce these parallels may enable broader comparative studies in the future. Although cross-cultural studies comparing the Islamic and non-Islamic perspectives are still in an embryonic stage, Rumi's ideas are too universal to be ignored in favor of parochial mystical interpretation.

The three Indian schools of *advaita* Vedanta, Buddhism, and Kashmir Shaivism developed in diverse regions at different times with distinctive spiritual and philosophical characteristics. One might wonder how they could have anything in common with Rumian experiences and formulations. But through reinterpreting Rumi's *ghazal*s and other verses against the backdrop of the fundamental conceptual beliefs of those schools, it becomes clear that, in Rumi's poetry and philosophy, we not only find a number of strong parallels, but also begin to demonstrate the "unconscious" approach of various spiritual traditions towards the same goals (i.e., non-dualism and enlightenment) and the use of similar metaphors to express their philosophies.

To give a brief overview, the main characteristics shared by *advaita* Vedanta[41] and Rumi's writings are non-dualism and the impersonal principle called Brahman. The concepts found in both Buddhism and Rumi's philosophy are non-self and final liberation. And Kashmir Shaivism and Rumi share concepts of non-dualism, aspects of Tantra, and the idea of personal as well as impersonal aspects of god (Śiva in

Kashmir Shaivism). We will begin with an introduction to each school before investigating the parallels to each within Rumi's lyrical *ghazal*s.

1. *Advaita* Vedanta and Rumi

Multiple Brahmanical traditions evolved over the course of three thousand years from the time when the earliest Vedas[42] were composed. Various philosophical schools also emerged in India. One of the most significant was *advaita* Vedanta. *Advaita* Vedanta, with its roots going back as far as the eighth century BCE, is the set of teachings based on the Upanishads as taught orally by the teachers. It was a non-dualist school that challenged the polytheism of the Vedas and the dualism of certain belief systems that relied on the distinction between the worshipper and the worshipped.[43] Over time, *advaita* Vedanta's teachings were written down in a few of the earliest Upanishads (Sanskrit, "to sit at the feet of" a master). The Upanishads became known as the "secret teachings"[44]—secret because they were kept away from the public, perhaps out of religious fear of shifting from the "polytheism" of the Vedic religious practices of the focus on Brahman,[45] as well as because of the mystical and intellectual intensity of their subject matter.

The most famous to revive the secret teachings of the Upanishads and systematize them under Vedanta was Adi Shankara (788–820). The core of Upanishadic teachings is non-dualism or *advaita*. *Advaita* is a Sanskrit word meaning non-dual (*dvait* [*duo*] means *two*, while the prefix "a" negates what follows it: non-two). Gradually, the teachings of the Upanishads were legitimized as part of the Brahmanical scriptures by the assignment of the name of *Vedanta*, meaning the last (*anta*) part of the *Veda*. Thus, by this designation it became *Veda-anta*, or the last and final teachings of the Vedas, and therefore implied to be highly significant in its spiritual and philosophical context.

The primary message of *advaita* Vedanta was an egalitarian spiritualized revolution, teaching that all men and women, regardless of caste, should search inside themselves to be liberated from illusory perceptions of this material world, as well as from the confusing cycle of birth and death (*samsara*). According to the Upanishads and their interpretation in the *advaita* Vedanta, there is one single, unchanging substrate at the heart of all the changing phenomena. There is only one reality, without a second: the very *one* that governs the outside and inside of all the changing structures is hidden from the human eye and intellect. This subsisting reality lives deep in the human heart.

This idea was propagated around 800 BCE, or possibly later, when the rebellious teachers of northwestern India preached that this single reality is Brahman, which takes precedence over all other gods and pseudo-realities.[46] These yogis were not satisfied with old Vedic practices that included exoteric ritualism, blood sacrifice, venerating objects, worshipping gods, and taking refuge in celestial forces; but more importantly they opposed any dualistic conceptions. These practicing yogis remained celibate, practiced non-violence, and fasted in order to attain inner purity. They articulated how human birth, life, and death, because of their changing nature, continue to produce the delusion that the world is real. The process repeats itself without an end or a specific direction in a broader cycle of existence. The proposed permanent solution in Vedanta involved internal contemplation to find the true reality, the inner immortal force (*Atman*), without resorting to exoteric ritualism and sacrificial rites. As the Upanishads developed, they were interpreted as containing a non-dualist approach, referring to only one real existence (Brahman), all the rest being fleeting and unreal.

This innovative approach to impersonalizing "god" was very different from the approach of the Vedic interpreters (*pandits*) that acknowledged dozens of personal god(s) with all kinds of anthropomorphic attributes and powers. The Brahman, an impersonal principle, was perceived as the absolute state of existence, and everything else was an illusion (*maya*)—meaning that the world was both real and unreal. In other words, *advaita* Vedanta rejects objective reality, and Shankara considers mind and matter as a "misreading of Brahman and nothing more."[47]

Although later Upanishadic texts include references to Śiva and a number of Vedic deities, in general the Upanishadic teaching elaborated on one single principle, Brahman, and its nature as man's fundamental identity—the Self. The Brahman and Self–Atman are one and the same unchanging reality. "The Atman is absolutely untouched and untainted by all the colorful changes wrought over it, and retains its pure majesty unsullied all through."[48]

There are two distinct characteristics of *advaita* Vedanta that are comparable with Rumi's ideas. One is the concept of *non-dualism*: the Upanishads emphasize that there is no essential difference between things since all have Brahman at their core; their different appearances are, so to speak, a case of mistaken identity. The other parallel is the notion of an *impersonalized "god,"* or ultimate reality—universal for all throughout time, with no religious or historical boundaries. It must be borne in mind that non-dualism and the impersonal Brahman

are two sides of the same coin, referring to the existence of one single reality, not two, which is Brahman.

These two important Vedantic features appear in Rumi's *Divan*. The metaphors and description of the non-dualistic principle are ubiquitous, as discussed in chapter 5. As was shown earlier, Rumi expounds on an impersonal god, identified as universal Love or reality, whose seat is in the human heart. Love is timeless and lives eternally through all animate and inanimate phenomena. There are a number of images and metaphors in the Upanishads on the subject of non-dualism and impersonal Brahman that seem to have direct parallels in Rumi's *Divan*.

Brahman-Love and Non-Dualism

Non-dualism from the Upanishadic perspective is embodied in the changeless Atman/Brahman, a formless and wordless realm. Non-dualism is also extrapolated from the idea that human existence and its source are one and the same thing. Dualism is a perception of differences that are illusory on the surface. The material world, with different shapes, colors, noise, and movements, is in a constant state of flux, which is juxtaposed against a greater undying and unchanging Reality, like a moving and changing film on a static white screen. The coupling of the transient with the non-transient or permanent represents the superimposing of the physical aspects of this world on the non-physical Brahman (the greater Self). The spiritual realization is the discovery of the permanent phenomenon through the awareness that all the changing things will eventually merge and join the unchangeable and silent source.

Rumi uses the term *Love* to describe what the Upanishads describe as *Brahman*. It is this Love that transcends all the earthly dualism and discriminations and transcends time and human sensory and intellectual judgment. Love is the spring and force of life that remains eternal. Love, in its *impersonal* image, is the universal foundation of the world of multiplicity (whereas in its *personal* form, Love for Rumi is *Shams*, whose face became Rumi's religion) (D: 1063). The intuitive knowledge and eventual attainment of unity with the principles of Brahman or Love impart a permanent joy; lightness and liberation from dualism, illusion, and grief may occur.

Merging with the ultimate source is a characteristic of non-dualism. The Mundaka Upanishad says: "As rivers flowing into the ocean find their final peace and their name and form disappear, even so the wise become free from name and form and enter into the radiance of the

Supreme Spirit [Brahman] who is greater than all greatness."[49] This idea takes a very similar form in Rumi's words: "Whether I am a flood or a river, we are all searching for you—the home for all flowing water is your sea." (D: 94) "Move through the shore of water and sand; journey to attain the gem that you are, the sea." (D: 3129) Elsewhere Rumi analogizes bodies as the foam being produced from the supreme spirit of the sea (D: 3109; M: V: 962; VI: 1252). The gems are in the bottom of the placeless sea (D: 3072; M: III: 493, 513).

In the Mundaka Upanishad, the knowledge of non-duality is realized through knowing one's true source.[50] Here the true source is the principle of *Brahman*. Rumi also writes: "You are with me and I do not know about it" (D: 174).

Elsewhere, in the Maitri Upanishad, the text points to Brahman as real and birth and death as unreal; only the wise can perceive this duality and convert it to a non-dual state: "*Samsara*, the transmigration of life, takes place in one's mind. Let one therefore keep the mind pure, for what a man thinks, that he becomes."[51] The Mundaka Upanishad makes an analogy about the two "selves," the individual self and the immortal Self, as two birds on the same tree: "There are two birds, two sweet friends, who dwell on the self-same tree. The one eats the fruits thereof, and the other looks on in silence. The first is the human soul, who resting on that tree, though active, feels sad in his unwisdom. But on beholding the power and glory of the higher spirit, he becomes free from sorrow."[52] Rumi formulates two selves, sitting in the same body: "How close is your being to my being" (D: 1515). "I am you, you are me; o my companion don't go away from yourself" (D: 1254). "I wish my being would not be aware of anything other than you—the 'real' self (*khod*) cannot know anything other than your meaningful existence." (D: 1946).

It is in the Maitri Upanishad that the magic of Love in attaining the immortal life of Brahman is praised: "Every step of light and Love is a step towards a new life . . . Love is joy of the Infinite of Brahman, it is here and now."[53] Here *Love* is associated to be identical with *Brahman*. The steps towards realizing the knowledge of the Ultimate Reality of Existence or Brahman, the immortal Self, according to the Upanishadic yogis, require moving away from petty worldly temptations, thoughts, and desires. "Soundless, formless, intangible, undying, tasteless, odorless, eternal, without beginning without end, immutable beyond nature, is the Self . . . [This] Self is free from impurities, old age, death, grief, hunger, and desires nothing—this Self is to be realized."[54]

Rumi also speaks of the immortality of Love: "My brother, father, and my ancestry is all Love—the essence of Love (*khwīsh-e 'Ishq*)

always remains, unlike the essence of ancestry (*khwīsh-e nasabī*) (genealogical ancestry)." Rumi's name and his genealogical ancestry were obliterated by Shams Tabrizi (D: 3048). No other source other than (bodiless) Shams is to be the real permanent essence of existence (D: 3051). "O my dying existence, step aside; o wine bearer, the immortal goddess (*sāqī*): enter!" (D: 34). "There is no other path, there is no other king, there is no other moon, other than this—all is mortal." (D: 2891).

Brahman's "name is Silence."[55] And Rumi says that despite hundreds of discourses, being without words, but with Shams, one is in supreme unity (D: 2967). Rumi puts a great emphasis on the principle of "Silence" or *khāmoush* to describe the nature of Love or Shams, as discussed in chapter 5. Silence removes the differentiation of the words and languages, in the same way it removes the differentiation among different groups of people. "If I silence myself, the secret of Love will be revealed, despite the diversity of the masses of the Turks, Indians, and Kurds." (D: 3052) Silence could be stimulated by sounds other than language, particularly music. Rumi used music as a nonverbal means to awaken in himself the sense of oneness and negation of all dualities (D: 2962).

The hidden permanent Self in the human shell coexists with the conventional consciousness of the continuously operating sensory faculties. The Svetasvatara Upanishad alludes to this state: "When in inner union, he is beyond the world of the body."[56] The Mandukya Upanishad describes Brahman/Atman as being in its own pure state. It (Brahman) is the end of evolution and non-duality (*advaita*)—Eternal OM. "Brahman is non-duality and love. He goes with his self to the Supreme Self who knows this, who knows this."[57] Rumi advocates the notion of *One* as the center, the sign, the whole, the hidden, the language, the time, the place, and the flowing in the "garden of Love" (D: 2994). "Here there is no room for two, what is the meaning of I and you—consider these two as one, so long as you are in our assembly." (D: 2964)

To awaken the dormant consciousness requires meditation, practices, and a guru who will teach about Brahman, since it cannot be learned through books or by relying on the intellect and studying.[58] Two things are hidden in the mystery of infinity of Brahman: knowledge and ignorance. Ignorance is knowing only the passage of time (*maya*, the illusion) and knowledge is knowing immortality. Brahman is in Eternity above ignorance and knowledge, as explained in the Svetasvatara Upanishad.[59] Then in Rumi's words: "In the realm of Love, knowledge is ignorance . . . its traceless alley is outside of knowledge and ignorance" (D: 2955).

The seat of the highest Self is the heart, as frequently alluded to in the Katha Upanishad: "Concealed in the heart of all beings is the Atman . . . Smaller than the smallest atom, greater than the vast spaces . . . In the secret high place of the heart there are two beings who drink the wine of life in the world of truth . . . When all desires that cling to the heart are surrendered, then a mortal becomes immortal, and even in this world he is one with Brahman."[60] The Mundaka Upanishad also refers to "the divine city of Brahman in the region of the human heart . . . welling in the secret place of the heart."[61] Needless to say, in Rumian rhetoric the heart is the throne of Love. There are many *ghazal*s and verses that can testify to this effect; it suffices, however, to refer to Rumi's image of the heart as the real *Ka'ba*, worthy of circumambulation (*tawāf*). "Circumambulate around the *Ka'ba* of the heart, if you have a heart. It is the heart that is the *Ka'ba* of meanings; why are your thoughts engaged with the mud?" (D: 3103).

The non-dual nature of Brahman is also similar to Rumi's analogy of the *Sun* that is one and without second, yet reflects on many lakes and appears manifold.[62] Certainly Rumi has no shortage of uses for the metaphor of the *Sun* for non-dualism, for *Love*, and for *Shams*. "The Sun of your beauty has no second to it (*nīstash sānī*)." (D: 3047, see also 2672). Rumi's Sun is the Sun of all beings, the Sun of Love, the knower of all tales (D: 2995); the Sun of timelessness, colorlessness; the Sun of all suns, the Sun of permanency, the Sun to which we all belong; and the Sun is Shams, among many other uses.[63]

The purpose of the Upanishads was to redirect attention from being preoccupied with the external gods of the Vedas or the god Prajapati (in this case the masculine Vedic Brahma), and transfer attention to the Brahman (neutral gender), the eternal and expanding principle. The quest of the wise yogis and the *buddhas* (awakened ones) from time immemorial has been to find a path to a liberated life.[64] "Those ascetics who know well the meaning of the Vedanta, whose minds are pure by renunciation, at the hour of departing find freedom in the regions of Brahman, and attain the supreme everlasting life."[65] For Rumi the power of Love lies in its immortality (D: 636). The real world and life is immortality; the tomb is unreal (D: 2593). The continuous return to the cycle of impermanent existence demands insight towards liberation (D: 2719).

Sometimes Rumi would resort to affirmation of what non-dual Love is, and other times he would negate its false dualistic definitions. The safest description of this unknowable phenomenon is "neither this, nor that" (*na īn bāshad na ān*, D: 577)—a formulation often noted in Indian philosophy, particularly the description of Brahman,

referred to as *neti neti* (not this nor that), as the single nameless reality. One of the most exuberant claims in Rumi's writings is "*māeem*: we are it," and in the Chandogya Upanishad: "Thou art That."[66] This means the lovers and the beloved in their union make all dualities of the *living beings* and *life* vanish. In Rumi's words, nothing perceptible remains. In the state of having become "that," he admonishes:

> Do not search for me in this world or the other;
> Both of these worlds are drowned in the world in which I wander.
> (D: 1759)[67]

Rumi's understanding of non-dualism[68] and his metaphors to formulate this awareness closely resemble those of *advaita* Vedanta. Thus, without his even knowing the content of the Upanishads, Rumi might be considered a de facto Vedantic philosopher. That the non-dualism of Rumi and *advaita* Vedanta share parallels to such an extent is probably not a linguistic coincidence, but represents a common unconscious search towards redeeming the integrity of certain primordial views of the world and ultimate reality without personalizing or dogmatizing it.

2. Non-Self and Liberation in Buddhism: Parallels in Rumi's Poetry

The concept of non-self (*an-atman*) is essential in the philosophy and approach of Buddhism. Strikingly, Rumi's poetry also contains hundreds of lines that refer to the concept of non-self (*bī-khwīshī*), as partly covered in chapter 5A. These commonalities point to fundamental similarities in the approaches of the Buddha and Rumi towards how to develop an insightful spiritual path that transcends the conventional mind and the limitations of geography, time, and culture.

The ideal of Buddhism may be described in various ways from different angles, but it can be summarized in one single goal: *liberation* from one's own anxious, deluded, and pain-producing mind. One explanation for the inner struggle of the mind is a false sense of selfhood, holding to the belief that there is a permanent and unchanging owner of the self in every body-and-mind complex who can survive death. What actually exists is only a changing mind-stream imagining fictitious individual selves focusing on the sensory world, which the Buddha perceived to be empty of any substantial forms that the human senses and intellect have the habit of perceiving. The self under scrutiny, according to the second sermon of the Buddha after

his enlightenment[69] and according to the great third-century Buddhist philosopher Nāgārjuna, has absolutely no real or central foundation.[70] Nāgārjuna further points out: "to observe the impermanence of the world is temporarily called the aspiration for enlightenment."[71]

Everything, literally everything, is in a constant state of flux and is thus void of a permanent self; the conventional "self" is nowhere to be found ultimately, and has no anchor since all exists in the realm of impermanence. In Zen literature, it is stated: "in the realm of being as is, there is no other and no self."[72] This philosophy of "non-self" is at the core of Buddhism; from this understanding, final liberation (*nirvana*) from the delusion about self, and freedom from the dissatisfaction of an ever-changing life with mistaken views of the world, can take place.

In contrast to *advaita* Vedanta, which considers the final and only substratum to be Brahman, Buddhism does not place belief in any fixed existence. The world of forms is in a permanent state of flux and, therefore, *empty* of anything that can be substantially given a fixed identity with the permanent and the ultimate self. Buddhism rejects the notion of the ultimate self or considering self as divine. The debate between the Buddhists and Vedantists on the substantiality of the self and the physical world continues, even though the Buddhist idea of *nirvana* and the Vedantic *mokşa* both seek liberation from delusion and from continuous birth and death (*samsara*).

From the Buddhist perspective, all psychological discomfort and the predicament of the human condition originate from the gullible human mind and its sensory faculties. The Buddha rejected the notion of god(s) or mysterious forces being responsible for the human condition, and moreover held that god(s) would not be the source of a solution. Existence, as far as the Buddhists are concerned, was taken out of celestial hands and put back into the human hand to be dealt with. The imprint of enlightenment in Buddhist understanding is inherent and unchanging in everyone, and its attainment is not necessarily in abandoning the world and going to live in a hermitage, but it is passing through the worldly and spiritual states without clinging to them and without taking them to be final and absolute.[73]

It is these two Buddhist principles of *non-self* and *nirvana* or enlightenment that find parallels in Rumi's world. The Buddhist notion of non-self is a prerequisite to removing the egocentric self, with all of its anthropocentric views, as a means to entering into a realm of understanding the non-self or *an-atman* state. This state equates with Rumi's idea of non-self (*fanā, bī-khwīshī*, or *bī-khodī*)

that occurs in the process of being absorbed into the realm of absolute Love.

Rumi perceived the state of Love as the immortal background behind the familiar world of unrelenting birth and death, and outside of the sensory world of appearances. In a strikingly similar vein, in Buddhism the changing world and the cycle of birth and death (*samsara*) must be seen against the background of an unchanging state that is free of the flux and of birth and death, free from the despair of change, a realm of *nirvana*—empty, without fluctuations, and anguish-free. Rumi's notion of Love can thus be analogous to the *nirvanic* state, a permanent state outside of the human sensory experience. To understand and to attain union with Love (*miʿrāj*, or ascending from the earthly and sensory conditions, or *nirvana*) requires first that one access non-self, or not value one's own changing views while in the path of Love, since Love is selfless and formless. The power of non-self is the means to attain the ultimate stage. One of Rumi's *ghazal*s reminds us of this, in a passage that sounds almost exactly like a description of the Buddha himself sitting under a tree during a consequential night attaining *nirvana*:

> In the night of ascension (*miʿrāj*), the king from the non-self state (*bī-khodī*)
> Journeyed a path that was a hundred thousand years old. (D: 2921)

To transcend the world of dualities demands insight in understanding and applying the awareness of non-self. In the process, the religious dualism of believers and non-believers in God is transcended and loses its hold in the path of non-self. The state of non-self is when the open, empty, and unchanging space is visualized. This path becomes an egalitarian and non-discriminatory path to enlightenment, as Rumi frequently suggests:

> A flame would burn down the belief (*īmān*) and disbelief (*kufr*)
> If you spread the creed (*dīn*) of non-self (*bī-khodī*). (D: 2906)

> You move to the right and the left, intoxicated without self (*bī-khwīsh*),
> Towards a direction that has no left or right. (D: 3142)

The egocentric mind, or "self" in the conventional sense, is the center where illusory dreams, ideas, and anxieties are shaped and launched. The Buddha was the main architect who laid out the relationship between this ego and the human psychophysical aggregates

of feelings, body, knowledge, temperament, and consciousness. All of these five aggregates lack a central self and are in a constant state of change. Rumi often uses *fanā* to refer to the waning of the functioning faculties in favor of a non-self state of mind that can connect with its non-self source. The field of *fanā* produces an understanding through which one's inner eye is then able to gaze at the Reality of all realities.

> Non-self is another self whose root is the absolute . . . (M: III: 512)
> Become extinct; extinct to your selfhood . . . (D: 499)
> The shadow of selfhood (*khwīshī*) becomes extinct (*fanā*) in the radiance of the Sun . . . (D: 1938)
> Non-being in the world is my creed . . . (D: 430)
> During the breath of the non-self state, the moon comes near you;
> in non-self the wine of the friend comes closer to you . . . (D: 323)

In some instances, Rumi refers to two sides of the self, even though they appear to be one and the same thing, like wheat in which the seed is separated from the chaff at harvest time (D: 524, 832). By paraphrasing Rumi, the dervishes are fractions of the world but through their non-self they are the rulers of all existence (D: 572). Dying to an anxious and material self is a way to break out of the prison of ego (*nafs*); this is when one is liberated and lands in the territory of Love (D: 636).

Rumi frequently declares that hearts without the experience of Love suffer from sadness (D: 499, 505), and the thinking faculty (*'aql*), as the center of self, is accountable for illusory thoughts (D: 132, 1122, 1185, 1849, 1859, 1931). The mind that operates on the five senses cannot penetrate the realm of non-self, which is permanent and resides nowhere. The gem of liberation is buried in the layers of our being (D: 648). But Rumi elegantly describes in a *ghazal* the danger of selfhood and physicality (*smoke*) overpowering the non-self (*light*):

> Each moment a call comes to our being,
> How long can this pain on earth continue? Liberate yourself!
> Those who have supreme awareness (*gerān-jānān*), their pain will be eliminated
>
> . . . .
>
> Our being is like a flame of light but its smoke exceeds its light;
> If the smoke become profuse, there will remain no light in the house.
> Once you reduce the smoke you'll enjoy the radiance of light in you;
> From your light both this domain and the other realm will be enlightened. (D: 26)

In order to remove the pain (Sanskrit *duhkka*; Persian *dard*) of existence from the mind, the Buddha recommended shifting the focus from the self to non-self, a process by which the centrality of the pain-producing self would be shifted to the luminosity of non-self. Rumi also claimed that selfhood inhibits the awareness of timelessness, a realm to which human intuitive existence is linked (D: 365). Rumi formulates it thus: "I become blissful when I negate [my] self, not when I affirm it" (D: 336).

In the Buddha's view, attaining liberation was principally the work of the mind, not the work of the body or its actions. Rumi also rejects a focus on the body, recommending seclusion in order to distinguish the donkey-like (*khar-gāh*) body from its non-physical dimension (D: 832, 3144). Not only the Buddha, but also later Buddhists, such as the famous fourth-century philosopher Vasubandhu, emphasized the psychology of the falsity of day-to-day reality, which like the body seems real but in fact disappears because it lacks a rooted foundation. The sensory system, or the fleeting self, is incapable of connecting with the past or the future and thus the human mind is left with the present time to work with, itself an opportunity to enter timelessness. This Vasubandhu attributed to the false logic of the self and the illusion of its continuity, which he refuted. Thus, in the Buddhist context the permanent self is a dream-like illusion that vanishes upon awakening (Buddhahood). By the same token, Rumi refers to illusion or the dream-like state (*khāb*) and its clashing with the awakened domain (*dowlat-e bī dār*) or domain of Love: "The moment the illusion was confronted by the awakened domain, it flew away just like a sparrow seeing a hawk." Love and Shams cornered and defeated the ephemeral dream (D: 501; M: III: 489–90). About the illusion of past and future time, Rumi, being on the same wavelength with Vasubandhu, also claims that "a hundred thousand years and one hour are one and the same [moment]" (M: I: 194; III: 461).

The Buddha stated that the incessant dissatisfaction with life stems from what he called the three poisons: *greed*, *anger*, and *delusion*. In a very similar vein, Rumi's version of hell is one's own character and the burning of three tendencies that lead to the darkness of human ignorance: greed (*herss*), anger (*khashm*), and lust (*shahvat*). When these three tendencies are reversed, then light, knowledge, and prospering can occur (M: II: 342; III: 543; IV: 806). Elsewhere, Rumi alludes to greed, lust, pride, and selfishness, which must be uprooted for the final liberation (M: V: 825, 921).

We cannot be certain whether Rumi was fully familiar with the teachings of the Buddha or had ever learned the story of the Buddha's

starting as a prince and ending up as an ascetic living on alms. However, Rumi's poetry contains numerous metaphorical references to the name *bot* (the Middle Persian name extracted from the Sanskrit *buddh* or *buddha*)[74] as the symbol of beauty, a moon-faced seducer of religious people, and the beloved.[75] And in two *ghazals*, Rumi allegorizes the Buddhists, their temple of *Nawbahār* (D: 2950), and the *Bahār* of the idol-worshipper (D: 2043), referring to the Buddhist temple (*Vihār* in Sanskrit) in Persian as *Bahār*[76] (of Bactrian origin) or *Nawbahār*.[77] Rumi has several poems that specifically allude to the wandering Buddhist monks (*shaman*[78] [not shāman] in its Central Asian application).

We shall not be afraid of the mouth and teeth of the angel of death,
Since we are alive through the grace of the laughing Buddha (*bot-e khandān*) of *kharābāt*.[79] (D: 334)

Since you have seen a kingdom and have been a monarch,
Therefore being a king, it's not fitting to be a beggar. (D: 343)[80]

If you want to attain a new life, then run away from being a king;
From the poison the antidote will appear.
Under the tree he takes delight about his destiny;
His enlightened existence will be at rest until the end of time. (D: 596)

Why do you keep away from my reach, o moon?
Despite the hundreds [of communities] we are still in your domain, whether we are idolatrous or Buddhist (*shaman*). (D: 1838)

Since you are the water of life, there will be no one left (*kasī namānad bāqī*),
And if you are the beautiful Buddha (*bot-e zībā*), then everybody will become Buddhist (*shaman*). (D: 1991)

Our hearts are monasteries (*bot-kadeh*), your image [Love] in him is Buddhism (*shamanī*),
Each Buddha statue facing a Buddhist (*shaman*) says: You are me. (D: 2883)

I do not wish to see my own image, o Buddhist monk (*shaman*).
I see your face, you see mine.
But he who can see his own nature
Will possess a radiant light beyond what the masses can perceive. (M: II: 262)

Aligned with the Buddhist concept of *nirvana*, which refers to "blowing out" the fire of pain and continuous craving, Rumi calls Love the water on such a fire in his search for liberation from grief and suffering (*vā-rastam az ʿazāb*) (D: 309). The non-self of the Buddha and Rumi aims to release the mind and the heart from delusion, craving, and the world of impermanency, the three poisons inherent in human life until their antidote, whether it is called *Nirvana* or *Love,* is found.

Chapter 6B

Rumi, Kashmir Shaivism, and Tantra

It is a challenge to properly introduce Kashmir Shaivism and its main characteristics because Kashmir Shaivism, as a non-dualist, Tantric school, is less known in the West (especially among the Rumi readers) than *advaita* Vedanta and Buddhism. The primary characteristics of Kashmir Shaivism that find parallels with Rumi's writings and practices include a powerful non-dualist worldview based on Śiva, impersonal and personal aspects of Śiva, a hymn to the "Sun-God," and aspects of Tantra that resonate with Rumi's teachings. These tantric practices include complete veneration of the guru; visualization of a (spiritually eroticized) female deity; transformation of all the dual phenomena into strong, non-dual imagery; chanting of mantras; making sacred gestures with the body; Tantric spiritual feasts known as *ganachakra* that utilize wine, music, dance, chant, and food; and finally, the rhymed Tantric poetry called *doha*. In this chapter, we will explore the parallels between Rumi and Kashmir Shaivism in terms of non-dualism, Tantric principles, and the venerated Śiva as an impersonal and personal principle/god.

First, let us briefly describe the primary conceptual aspects of Kashmir Shaivism and Tantra, before measuring them against the world of Rumi and his poetry to reveal their affinities and parallels.

What Is Kashmir Shaivism?

Kashmir Shaivism is an important and influential school of the Śaiva cult. It developed a non-dualist understanding of the teachings of

the Tantras, revealed by Śiva independently of the Vedic tradition just as Śaiva Siddhanta (the doctrine of Śaiva) developed a dualist understanding. Although both originated in North India and travelled to the South, non-dualist Shaivism, with its strong emphasis on the feminine, was not pursued in the South after the fourteenth century. Dualist Śaiva Siddhanta in the South focused on temple worship and associated itself with the Vedic tradition. Non-dualist Shaivism remained largely independent of the Vedic tradition and, because of Muslim dominance from the thirteenth century onwards, remained confined to Kashmir, cut off from the mainstream traditions that acknowledged the supremacy of the Vedas.[1]

In the ninth century, Kashmir Shaivism began with Vasugupta, Somananda, and Uptaladeva. Later, Abhinavagupta, an intellectual and mystic (similar to Rumi) of the tenth century, extensively developed the doctrines of Kashmir Shaivism. An excellent Sanskritist and specialist in Sanskrit poetics and aesthetics, Abhinavagupta came from a well-known Brahmin family in Kashmir. He was well versed in Śaiva philosophy and Mahayana Buddhist philosophy prevalent in Kashmir at that time.[2]

According to Kashmir Shaivism, Śiva is the personification of pure consciousness. "Siva is the sole reality, which although infinite, unconditioned and perfect in all respects imposes upon himself by the inherent power of his own free will the limitations of time, space and form in order to become all of the countless phenomena of the universe both sentient and insentient. He is the light of consciousness that shines as all things even as it remains eternally one and unchanging. Thus, each individual soul is Śiva Himself but residing in the psychophysical organism with which it wrongly identifies itself, its subjective consciousness is contracted by the ignorance of that fact which generates the sense of duality (called *maya*). Thus, it becomes subject to its own actions (*karma*) and is bound to the cycle of recurring birth and death (*samsara*)."[3] But this consciousness is asleep in the human mind because of ignorance. The obscuration of Śiva was concocted in order to awaken the very power in humans that would remove the veil. The general ideal of Śaivite practice began with the notion of liberating the authentic self. "Śaivite practice is based on the central ideal that everything is contained within one single consciousness and so is directed at achieving the liberating recognition that the soul and everything else is nothing but that Śiva consciousness through the experience of its universal vibration or activity (*spanda*). Śiva's absolute existence should not be lost in the world of multiplicity, which is simply the contracted form of consciousness."[4]

The non-dualism of this doctrine teaches that Śiva is everything: the individual, *maya* (illusion), the world, and the energy of thought, yet "neither one, nor two, nor neither one nor two."[5] For in the non-dualism of Kashmir Shaivism, the substance (body) of the universe and its efficient cause (energy) are considered one and the same.[6] The divination of human consciousness is the discovery of Śiva in oneself.

Thus, an important element of Kashmir Shaivism is the teaching concerning Śakti (*Śak* means "power"), the dynamic female energy and goddess. Śiva acts through the energy of Śakti.

She is the female power that, stemming out of him, vibrates the creative consciousness of the Absolute.[7]

Through her, Śiva creates everything and everything becomes him. Human beings carry Śakti in them, and she needs to be awakened in order for people to discover their own divine Śiva as well as be able to see Śiva in everything. With the union between Śiva and Śakti, the energy and consciousness of the universe is complete, free from subject and object, and this consciousness is able to contain the manifold things of the Universe—regardless of good or bad, free from male/female gender—which are considered in reality to be one single supreme entity, the source of all energies, free from cause and effect.

Śiva is everything, everywhere: male, female, mind, the world, the good, the bad, every act and action. It is like seeing all of existence in a mirror; it seems separate, but in fact it is a non-dual reflection of the original. Therefore, everyone has been given the same consciousness of the Universe.[8] The challenge of recognizing Śiva as the pure source of all consciousness and everything is the goal of Kashmir Shaivism. The vibration of human consciousness was stimulated by the practices described in texts (such as *Śiva-Sutra*) that Kashmir Shaivism focused on.

The supreme power and the creation, which are of the same source, are perceived to be separate only in forms and genders. The multiplicity and dualism eventually will have to merge into one single reality. The union of Śiva-style male and female deities leading to liberating insight is seen in many mandalas.[9]

In Kashmiri Shaivism, the energy of the mind is controlled in the *heart*. All the senses merge into the center of the heart and separate mind from everything else, because the thinking mind is logically one-dimensional and, therefore, the heart becomes the medium of attaining oneness with everything, leading eventually to supreme happiness.[10] In the last stage, the unification with the ocean (the ocean of

the nectar of awareness) and the universe as the mass of its foam are all "Śiva Himself in sooth."[11]

RUMI AND SHAIVISM

Rumi's visualization of Love or Shams, like the Kashmiri Shaivite vision of Śiva, is absolutely non-dual. Everything that is dancing in the Universe is Love: "The oneness is Love: no two could be found here, even though it appears as you, or Love, or the energy of Love" (D: 1309). In other words, not only is Love itself a non-dual entity, but also what has been produced from Love is identified with non-dual Love. Other times it is Shams who takes over that non-dual role, and consciousness like Śiva: "Shams . . . the king of existence and god of heart" (D: 151). Shams . . . it is all you, it is your Love, reveal all the "selves" in you (D: 210). Everything stems from the grace of Shams; it is all Shams, while everything else is non-existing (*lā*) and non-real (D: 551). This non-dualist approach is a characteristic common to Shaivism and the world of Rumi (and in some ways to *advaita* Vedanta[12]).

Of course, the idea of the *heart* as the center of consciousness in Kashmiri Shaivism is not foreign to Rumi's poetry, or even to mystical and Sufi poetry in Persian. The list of poems in the *Divan* referring to the heart as the center of all transmutation, and to understanding the power of Love, is endless. The pairing of the two, Love and heart, provides much potential for poetical allegories. Rumi's image of the heart is the supreme entity that has broken down all other images (D: 999). The beloved's place is in the heart (D: 1445).

The cessation of the rational consciousness is done for the sake of giving way to the heart, to allow another level of consciousness to surface in which self is identified with the Supreme. As in the writing of Kşemaraja in his eleventh-century *Secret of Self Recognition*, the heart is said to be the center of the real self, which is Śiva. "In the heart-lotus of one whose mind has been controlled. . . . he whose senses are merged in the ether of the heart, who has entered mentally into the center of the heart-lotus, who excludes everything else from consciousness, attains to supreme happiness, O Beautiful One."[13] The pervasive undifferentiated world has been masked by the world of differentiation, causing delusion. The heart is the bed of oneness where the Supreme lies in rest, as it must be rediscovered.

Tantric practices, an integral part of Kashmir Shaivism (as they also are in Tibetan and Nepali Buddhism), demand analysis here before

they are compared against the concepts Rumi presents in the poems of his *Divan*.

Tantra in Tibetan Buddhism and Kashmir Shaivism

What exactly is meant by Tantra? Tantra consists of a series of practices and perceptions that have been developed outside of any given religion, but have helped the practitioners of various doctrines to gain a more profound understanding of self and reality, and provide a means for a final liberation. In other words, Tantra is an auxiliary spiritual and energy tool available to any given spiritual school to train the consciousness in order to attain perfection and unity with a larger Universe. Tantric practices complemented the goals of Kashmir Shaivism very neatly, and became a strong component of it. In general, the experiential knowledge produced through Tantric practices is designed to attain a non-dual state of being.

In Tantra, in contrast to ascetic practices, there is no rejection of the body, nor of the world. Tantra provides a meditative state that allows the externalizing of the divine energy, since the body by itself is not stimulated enough to cultivate pure wisdom. Tantra in Sanskrit means "to weave." It suggests the tying together of a series of beliefs and rituals that appeared in Indian society around the fifth century CE and evolved from then onward, becoming incorporated into various religions and doctrinal traditions. The performances can range from mental imagery to bodily actions, all aiming to vibrate and transform consciousness in order to release its true character to the practitioner. As for Kashmiri Shaivism, the sexual Tantra was disguised as Śakti, who as a female symbol was more acceptable than an actual female, and Śiva was the vehicle of illumination among the Kashmiri literati and mystics.[14] The attractiveness of Śiva has been his fluidity, contrasting with the idea of a static god or gods who created the world *ex nihilo* but are no longer active—so god and the world have become two different things in those traditions, which is not the case in Kashmir Shaivism.

The whole purpose of Tantra, which is also believed to have been taught by the Buddha separately from his conventional teachings, is to discover the pure land (or Buddha field), find a non-dual and empty realm, and eventually reach final enlightenment.[15] Nevertheless the taboo against Tantra as it is commonly perceived has been a reaction to its association with sexual yoga and the Tantric literature, which has suffered through misinformation or misuse.[16]

Such misunderstandings have often derailed and trivialized the discussion of Tantra and its greater spiritual values. It was this taboo that caused the conservative Buddhists, Brahmins, and even practicing Sufis to keep their distance from the aspects of Tantra, such as the sexual union with the yoginis (female goddesses), that transgressed against the limitations of their sacred doctrines. However, Tantra was adopted by certain ascetics around 500 CE as a reaction to self-mortification and renunciation.[17] It also stood against rigid, structured, dry Vedic religious practices. It was around the seventh and eighth centuries that Śaivites and Buddhists began to incorporate Tantric practices in their circles with the sexual yoga of the goddess Kundalini.[18] Through time, however, the transgressive practices became submerged and concealed for the adepts and Tantra changed its non-transgressive practices for laypeople and beginners.[19]It is to be noted, Tantric teachings were always through oral transmission; it is only in later periods when they were written down without the author's name. In some sense, Tantra is also described as the dialogue between the god and goddess in quest of union.

The Tantric practices developed within the Buddhist and Kashmiri Śaivite circles were incredibly similar to spiritual practices that ultimately emerged in the Rumi-Shams circle, as we shall see. They challenged conventional perceptions of religious life and practice. They included the complete veneration of the guru by elevating him (in Rumi's case, Shams) to a semi- or fully divine level,[20] as well as interiorizing the imagery of a female deity (i.e., *sāqī* or the *immortal beloved* [D: 2104]) as a means of union and to reach perfection. It meant embracing all good and bad, pure and impure, as dual phenomena that would eventually dissolve in an elevated level of consciousness. The obliteration of duality was to be attained through the use of silence by bringing differentiated words to an undifferentiated level.

While female deities were the primary object of worship in Tantra, the worship of male deities in Kashmiri Tantra was also common.[21] The idea behind this is male-female symbolism in the spiritual context: as Śakta and Śiva unite, "the universe, formerly experienced as a reality set apart from consciousness, ceases to exist."[22] The union of the lover and beloved is seen as a complete source of energy. Until the antinomian elements were also toned down, the Śakta cult, with both Śaiva and Buddhist followers, sometimes met underground and recognized each other through coded signs and words.[23] In the context of "divine" sexual union, as well as relinquishing the practice of

self-mortification, the female deification continued, although women were still socially subject to discrimination.[24]

* * *

It is somewhat surprising, perhaps even shocking, to see some of the ways in which Rumi's writings and practices seem to echo specific Tantric practices. These parallels are fascinating and raise many questions about the source of the commonalities. The ancient Tantra practices had their centers in the greater Iranian world (notably in the Swat Valley[25]), and L. Sutin claims that sacred sex, meditation, and visualization practices had some Iranian, Central Asian, and Gnostic origins before surfacing in India and Tibet.[26]

One of these parallels includes the complete devotion to the guru—for Rumi, Shams Tabrizi—both as guru and as the equivalent of the sun and divine reality (D: 387). Shams-consciousness for Rumi became a reality similar to the visualization of Śiva as both a personal and an impersonal principle, or god. Another commonality is the veneration of the visualized female deity. For Rumi it is the seductive beloved (*maʿshuq*) or other times *Sāqī*, the beauty with curly hair who hides behind the veil and seduces the hearts; in Tantra it is the female deity, often Śakti. (*Sāqī* and Śakti has, after all a certain phonetic similarity). The secrecy arose when female deities were eroticized, with the female seduction completely spiritualized, whether in its "imagined" or "real" form, in order to feed into a liberating insight and attainment of enlightenment.[27] In conservative Islamic societies, much as in conservative Hindu-Buddhist societies, the internalization of a spiritually eroticized female deity could be expressed only through imagery and visualization, including through poetry.[28] The message of union with the female partner to attain wholeness in Rumi's poetry is clear.

As for the representation of the female deity, Rumi uses the beautified face of a *bot* (idol), *hur* (angel), or *sāqī* (cupbearer, goddess, sometimes described as having a penetrating eye, red cheek, curly hair, and seductive attractiveness) in his poetical imagery (D: 432, 434, 492, 520, 602, 689). This meditative visualization was used as means to transform the body and mind and make the hidden become apparent. In the following poem, Rumi cleverly combines the importance of music in the visualization process of the female deity with the Buddhist imagery of "moon," "wheel," and "Buddhist": "O minstrel, once you take a *daf* in your hand, play this scale, because my union partner is coming. While that beautiful-faced

bot is showing her face, by this now the moon is arising from the wheel of the *bot-parast* (Buddhist)" (D: 686). "O minstrel, retell our secrets" (D: 2226, 2244). "Her hair is a trap for one to lose all rationality and long for union with her—as if one is drunk with a hundred-year-old wine—O Muslims, what could remain a secret in my state?" (D: 1413).

> The blazing wine appeared in the scene; O angel of grief, move to the corner.
> O mind of mortality, go away; O goddess (*sāqī*) of immortality (*bāqī*), come in. (D: 34)

The purpose of the visualization of the female lover is to make one's non-vital self disappear; otherwise the longing lingers and she stays far away (D: 1080). The secret love affair symbolizes the shaking of one's conventional consciousness. Rumi says: "My *Ka'ba* is her alleyway and my *qibla* (prayer direction) is her face." The visualization extends further to deepen the vibration of the mind: "I live in my chaos, my disorder; o my commotion and restlessness; my Muslim belief was robbed of me, o you Muslims" (D: 3010).

In addition, Tantric spiritual feasts are much like the gatherings referred to by Rumi as *majlis* (assembly). Tantric spiritual feasts with wine, music, dance, chant, food, and even the presence of female company became known as *ganachakra* ("gathering circle": in Sanskrit, *gana* means "gathering"; *chakra* means "circle"). In its Tibetan context, *ganachakra* is known as *tsog*. Tantric feasts were often held behind closed doors.

The Tantric notion of *ganachakra* seems to have infiltrated the Persian poetic metaphor known as *majlis* or *bazm-e majlisiān* (the feast for the assembled ones) or *halghe* (circle) with musical performance (*motrib*), wine (*sharāb* or *mai*), chant, and dance (*samā'*), either in the presence of females (*sāqī*) or only visualized, all behind closed doors, sometimes until dawn (D: 2594, 2636). In literally hundreds of his verses, Rumi poetically describes sitting in a circle and dancing in the celebration (*bazm-e majlisiān*) (D: 339, 421, 434, 466, 520, 686, 1157, 1162, 1720, 1854, 1981). "O the minstrel of the lovers, vibrate your string (*tār*), throw a flame and burn both the believers (*mu'min*) and the non-believers (*kāfir*)" (D: 1156). The sound of music is interiorized in the same way that Rumi visualizes everything else (D: 2838). The removal of dualism is of course one of the goals of such feasts. For Rumi, the visualization of Shams was another means to vibrate his consciousness.

Dance and music contain for Rumi a hidden message for the heart in which the heart finds its serenity (D: 1734, 1832). The whirling is like the Cosmos, a kind of search for the ultimate truth (D: 1749). The visualization of Shams and his presence is attained by hearing music and chant. "O minstrel, play melodically so that my spirit comes to my body; as you play, tune it up in the name of Shams Tabrizi . . . O musician, for God's sake, chant nothing but Shams Tabrizi . . . Sing Shams-e Din, Shams-e Din, Shams-e Din and no more, so that you could witness how the dead corpses have begun to dance in their [white] shrouds" (D: 1981).

Sometimes, in place of *majlis*, Rumi uses the metaphor of *kharābāt* (brothel, or wine tavern) to stand for a forbidden place and forbidden act; sometimes he uses the metaphor to imply a wine tavern, with all its female beauties, where one becomes intoxicated without fearing social slander (D: 334, 477, 516, 1152, 1332, 2983).[29] In one of his most eloquent *ghazals,* Rumi depicts the important imageries of wine, female deity, and heart. *Kharābāt* is the ultimate state of social and intellectual impurity and contempt, where one no longer sees oneself but spends one's gold and silver to enjoy the company of the beloved, *sāqī*. Rumi goes on; she is the candle of a ruined heart. It is as if she were thrown in my heart by Satan . . . "When I keep silent I am like the wine in *kharābāt*; the minute I reveal myself, I am no more than a doorman in *kharābāt*" (D: 1445).

A cup of wine in one hand, her curled hair in the other,
A stunning whirling dance in the center I long for.

O *sāqī*, take this lyrical song, and o refined minstrel,
Tune it the way you know I long for.
Make your glorified face appear from the east, Shams Tabrizi . . .
(D: 441)

The metaphor of wine played a paradoxical role in Rumi's poetry. *Wine* symbolized a higher level of consciousness, since wine itself is a substance, immersed in itself beyond sobriety and drunkenness, beyond being permitted or forbidden by religion. Thus, the metaphor suggests transcending the tendency of the dual mind (D: 472, 497, 802, 1173, 1542, 1588, 1685, 1846). This strongly echoes the presence of wine as it was used or visualized in the Tantric *ganachakra* feasts. Rumi described the wine bottle as a symbol of the inner human environment—drunk inside but sober outside (D: 489). "Once you become drunk, how would one know the right way of bowing and prostration in prayers?" (D: 496). "The companion just appeared and

I have a wine cup in hand, the kind of wine that the religion forbids" (D: 706, 2052, 2080). In one hand a cup of wine of faith, in the other the flag of disbelief (D: 785).[30] The wine-worshippers are those to transmute their minds trapped in illusion of existence (D: 818, 819).

Wine is also a medium to revitalize one's "opposite" half—the union of male and female sides. The wine is used to remove the inhibition about going behind the veil and consummating a union with one's other half (D: 1371). The goal of wine intoxication is not being able to recognize the distinctions of the world of dualism. "I am so intoxicated and drunk this moment that I cannot even distinguish Eve from Adam" (D: 1542). It is to discover the primordial day when there was no form or place (D: 516, 517, 1827). All these things point to a non-dual state.

In other places, Rumi considers this hidden wine, one sip of which brought us and the world into being (D: 637, 1733). The wine of the lovers boils inside the chest, so that the non-apparent Love could remain unexposed (D: 662). Witnessing the sobriety of the religious conservatism of his time, Rumi admits: "The feast is hidden because of the opponents, while there is no other place left to drink wine" (D: 113). "O heart, enter the royal feast, and consent to drink the red wine" (D: 102).

The wine that transforms the consciousness to experience Love must be from a forbidden place, like *kharābāt* (D: 354). Rumi uses the wine metaphor[31] to refer to multiple states in seeking Love, but he tends to use it symbolically. Although Shams and certain mystics may have drunk real wine, Rumi was not inclined to deal directly with it.[32] Because of all the suspicions of the theologians and scholastic Sufis, Rumi used the strategies of secrecy and poetry to deal with wine, dance, and negligence of religious matters.

Apart from metaphorical imagery of wine, both Rumi and Tantra shared an emphasis on experiences in a spiritual feast, the Tantric experiences encapsulated in the rhymed lyrical poetry of *doha*, and those of Rumi's captured by the imageries and visualization in his *ghazal*s.

The similarities between the *doha* and Rumi's *ghazal*s is significant because both are rhymed poetry composed in connection with unusual spiritual practices not accessible to the general population—Tantra or *majlis* with dance and music. Tantric *doha* poetry gained a great deal of attention in medieval India. It derived from the earlier Sanskrit poetry, with strong ending rhymes. The idea was to maintain the correlation between rhyme and meaning in order to convey a spiritual advice and experience to the readers and practitioners.[33]

However, beyond the literary aspects, the *doha* at its core can only be understood within the context of the Tantric feast, which was

designed to open *chakras* by yogic thinking, and for the release of mental and physical energies for the purpose of rapture and sublimation.[34] *Dohas* maintain the rhetoric of paradoxes within one *doha*, or between one *doha* and another, for the purpose of suspending conceptual and logical thinking while striving to transcend it.[35]

The other purpose of *doha* was to celebrate the guru and to be at his feet in absolute submission as part of the teaching, the task of which is to inform, advise, and shape the disciple.[36] This type of poetry, with the theme of the centrality of the guru, also influenced the great Indian poet Kabir[37] (d. 1448), whose aim was to demonstrate the worship of an interior formless god (like the image of a guru):

> The guru's word is one;
> Ideas about it endless.
> Sages and pandits exhaust themselves,
> The Vedas can't touch its limits.[38]

Thus, it seems *doha* poetry often served a purpose similar to the role that Rumi's own poetic writings played within his group: as a means of revering his guru Shams, and for inspiration, spiritual instruction, paradox, and challenge to the mind, to promote ecstasy within a devoted group.

As reflected in the *doha* poetry, the guru becomes a dominant part of the Tantric teachings. In the Tibetan Tantric system, the guru, as the Buddha is claimed to have done, would transmit his highest teachings to the selected disciples only orally under mentorship to prevent the misapplication of the teachings.[39]

Rumi himself also said that the perfect (*sheikh*) guru is he who has attained a complete energy and enlightenment, which he can transfer to his disciple (D: 402, 747). In order to become enlightened, one would have to pledge complete subjugation to the guru and revere him above everything else.[40] Shams seems to have been for Rumi not an ordinary guru, but someone for whom Rumi sacrificed his career; he had knelt before him until Shams' last disappearance. The thousands of verses containing Shams' name are an external as well as an internal symbol of Rumi's devotion to him, almost turning him into a supreme deity. "The Truth is Shams Tabrizi and there is no other; why should a trivial thing be called the truth, when the King has no peer?" (D: 137). Shams is an object of veneration and prostration (D: 155), *Kaʿba* and *qibla* (D: 176, 180), and a source of light for the whole world (D: 1628, 1637). It is Shams who attracted thousands of believers and non-believers to revere him (D: 914). The job of a guru

is also to liberate the disciple from his nagging self: "So long as Shams provides the wine and you become drunk, then you would become empty of yourself, whether in this or another world" (D: 742).

The devotional practice of disciple-guru is a central principle in the Tantra tradition. According to Tantra, secrecy should be guarded in transmitting the Tantric oral teachings. The rigorous training with skillful discretion is expected to turn the view of the disciples to the importance of the guru as the giver of the truth and as an object of devotion.[41] The job of the guru is to know the practice of Tantra; the amalgamation of all sorts of practices in secret could harm those who are not trained or who misunderstand the intent behind the practice. The secrecy of Tantric culture was also motivated by the suspicions and negative views of its transgressive practices held by the conservative Brahmins and Buddhists. Thus, the practices of Tantra remained outside of Vedic domains.[42]

Rumi had to be equally vigilant about the theologians and the mobs who had harmed those before him, accusing them of apostasy and heresy for their antinomian behavior and practices. So there may be two motivations for secrecy: that the core of the experience should not be articulated in public, and that certain practices and ideas needed to remain behind closed doors. Rumi refers in multiple verses to *rāz*, the *secret*, in his poems—what has not been and should not be exposed.[43]

The imagery in many of Rumi's *ghazal*s deflects attention to the secrecy of the whole Rumian enterprise. The *ghazal* below is an example of strong and vivid imagery of Love as the ultimate reality and deity, defying the religious dogma on visualizing anything other than the sanctioned attributes of God. In this poem, Rumi sounds fearful about the fact that he is visualizing something else—the moon, an angel, a human face. It seems he is equating Shams ("human or angel") with the image that he is visualizing. He asks Love for reassurance, and Love assures him that there is nothing else other than one single principle being visualized, whether it is Love or Shams—who are both God.

I am the servant of the moon, speak to me of nothing other than the moon,
Say nothing to me other than sweet tales by the candlelight.
The other day when I was out of my senses, Love saw me and said:
"I am coming, don't scream, don't tear off your clothes, say no more!"
I said to Love, "I am afraid of something else."
Love said, "There is nothing else, say no more!"

. . . A moon-faced beauty found its way to my heart.
To journey on the path of the heart is so soothing, say no more!
. . . I asked if this face is an angel, or just wondrously human,
And Love said, it is other than angel or human, say no more!
I cried, "Say what it is! It is upending my state of being!"
Love said, "Remain transformed and say no more!
You have always wondered about this world of images and colors,
Get up, leave this house, move on and say no more!"
I said, "O heart, be my father, tell me, is this really god?"
"My son, it is. Hush, say no more!" (D: 2218)

Rumi says, keep it secret in your chest so that no outsider would become aware of your thoughts (D: 2927). Do not reveal the secrets of the higher order (D: 257). In addition, the secrets about Shams would have to be guarded. There are a number of verses that point to keeping the secret of Shams protected, as discussed in chapter 4. The goal of all the secret practices was to attain immortality by joining and becoming one with the source of all things, be it Love or Śiva (or Shams).

There is no other path except this, there is no other king except this.
There is no other moon except this, anything except this is mortal. (D: 2891)

Rumi does not hesitate to mention that the secrets passed on to him should not be revealed (D: 709, 792, 828, 1161, 1338, 1615), and so it seems that he and Shams shared an intensely reverential and secret guru-disciple relationship.

Thus, the imageries of the female deity, wine-drinking, veneration of the guru, music, dance, and the whole concept of non-dualism, (all of which find parallels with Tantra) were to be kept from the religious class. The pedantic theologians' suspicions against Shams, and perhaps against Rumi, could have been due to some of Shams' and Rumi's mischievous attitudes towards conventional religion. This could be why Rumi composed a *ghazal* addressing the misapprehension that his religion (defiant against the dogma of Islam) is a devious religion of non-self and it is the Religion of Love:

Go and interpret the religion of the lover to be the opposite of all other creeds,

. . .

If you are cynical, saying "you have a devious (*kadj*) religion,"

I have bought the religion of her eyebrows and have given my life for it.
Out of this devious religion I have become drunk and have kept my lips closed.
Recognize the enlightened heart only, the rest is nothing but details.
(D: 1869)

In the Buddhist Tantric understanding, the chanting of mantras with the movement of the body, and making sacred gestures along with the visualization of a deity, are practiced in order to generate the spiritual energy in which the worshipper and the worshipped are no longer separate.[44] Every sound and every mantra and all beings are considered as the Buddha, and everything everywhere free from good or bad as the reality of *nirvana*.[45] There is no divine intervention in all that takes place in the mind. All things, even the dullest things surrounding the world, become symbols of meaning, and their bad or good characteristics are not denied, but through the work of body-speech-mind are converted into spiritual awakening and penetration into the non-dual reality.[46]

According to the yogis of Kashmir, the realization of non-dual god-consciousness lasts moments, but its impact transforms the consciousness with joy and the attainment of oneness with all animate and inanimate things of the world as the ultimate reality for the rest of one's life and beyond. The elation of consciousness is the liberation from illusion while one experiences the body. Dwelling between one's consciousness and the supreme consciousness is a continuous series of experiences that will keep arising anew. Through this experience all the external things remain the same and unquestioned while one continues living a full life, outside of all dualism, without limitation.[47] The Universe thus appears as identical with the self. Thus, life becomes a dance performed by Śiva for Śiva while there is no dual view of good and bad, no pure and impure, no distance between human and god, leading to a full, life-embracing outlook. Whatever the knower does or whatever takes place is understood to be Śiva and nothing else: it is the world of oneness, and not two—without good and bad.

The Brahmins in Kashmir, who had always been obsessed with purity, faced the challenge of how through Tantric and non-dual practices they could practice and attain their true self without violating conventional religious tenets. The dissolution of the acting self, combined with the "impurity" of Tantric practices, would reveal to them the *illusion of purity and impurity* residing in things, persons, and actions and free them from the dual approach.[48] To avoid misinterpretation

and being socially libeled because of the sexual taboo, public Shaivism in Kashmir around the tenth century interiorized its Tantric deities for attaining union and expansion of consciousness.[49] Nevertheless, both religious and non-religious people still succumbed to dualistic notions of wrong or right because of their dominance in moral-religious life, while in Tantra such duality is untenable.

In the Rumian context, the sacred dance (*samā'*) was a physical gesture that would unite the body and consciousness. And in his liberating chants of oneness, Rumi left no room for belief and disbelief or good and bad. Good and evil must expire if one knows the true source of life (D: 703, 1791). "So long as the glory of Tabriz, Shams-e Din, is with you, there is no ground to worry about right and wrong in his company" (D: 3068). The mirror of consciousness must be polished so that all the religious dualities of right and wrong fade away. "My disbelief is only in the mirror[50] of your belief; o son, look insightfully at belief and disbelief" (D: 1098). The effect of the meditation is to transcend all forms of dualities, including images and image-making—that is to say, both the image and the image-maker must be purged (D: 2950).

The world of non-dualism in the Tantric and Rumian sense always remained free from religious attitudes towards sins and virtues. For Rumi, committing sins by breaking religious rules does not prevent anyone from trying time and again to attain the state of union. Muslims have always feared unforgivable breaking of religious laws. If drinking wine or other practices forbidden by conventional religions were to be abandoned by taking a vow, this vow might be broken for the sake of reaching the non-dual realm.

Repentance (*tobeh*) in the poetry of the *Divan* designates taking a religious vow against breaking the rules of the faith again after they have been broken once. Yet Rumi, stepping outside of "religious purity," admits he has broken the same rules many times. At the same time, he claims that disregarding one's repentance is forgivable, and in fact it provides another opportunity to return to the path of Love, that Love which knows no boundaries between faith and infidelity. Even the Prophet repented 70 times every night, so it is permissible for you to break your vows (D: 444). Rumi, in his own way with deftly crafted words, aimed to depart from the religious obsession with purity and impurity.

> I have broken my vow (*tobeh*), even though I promised it two hundred times;
> I have seen the moon of repentance only once, then I considered myself freed from it. (D: 1478)

I promised two thousand times not to scratch my foolish head;
Because of you my promise fell short again, and my firmness became the prey to the wind. (D: 1625)

The time has come to break the *tobeh*,
To be freed from the trap of thousands of *tobeh*. (D: 1927)

Another parallel to be touched upon here is the personal and impersonal image of the deity. Kashmir Shaivism as a non-dualist doctrine reveres the image of Śiva in its impersonal and personal images. Once it is a personal deity, it can be translated to allow the devotional aspect of dualism of the venerated and the venerator. The non-dualist argument is that all things contain Śiva. Even dualistic elements are also perceived to be within the realm of Śiva—a method to contain dualism within non-dualism or to combine the personal and impersonal image of Śiva. Rumi's non-dualism seems to follow the same principle of impersonal (Love) and personal (Shams), containing the venerated and the venerator as non-separable. While the non-dualism of Rumi is covered in chapter 5, it is worth mentioning here that his spiritual world is free of religious dualism—free from the distinction between believer and non-believer, and free from the separation of the worshipper and the worshipped. The parallels between the Tantric practices and those of Rumi are striking.

Also strikingly similar is the veneration of the Sun-God in the tradition of Kashmir Shaivism, which resembles Rumi's idea of venerating the sun, perhaps as a physical representation of Love, but more importantly "sun" as a direct translation of Shams' name.

THE SUN-GOD HYMN IN KASHMIR SHAIVISM AND RUMI'S "SUN-GOD"

The worship of the Sun (Sanskrit *surya*), despite its lost Vedic-Puranic-Tantric roots, has been associated with the Kashmir Śaivites, especially with the eleventh-century Kṣemarāja commentary on the Sun-God hymn.[51] Sun worship was associated with the eighth-century Mārtanda Temple in Kashmir,[52] but its Iranian Mithraist influences have been toned down compared to the Iranian (Mithraist) iconographic representation in the Sun-God tradition in Kashmir. This is while Mithraism in Central Asia declined because of the Muslim conquest around the eighth century. Regardless of its historical background, the use of this specific hymn in Kashmir Shaivism links the image of Sun and Śiva.

Although Śiva is not directly mentioned in the hymn, Kşemarāja's commentary on the hymn considers the Sun to be the physical manifestation of Śiva on a symbolic, spiritual level.[53] Kşemarāja says that in attaining *nirvana,* the orb of the Sun is a place to take refuge since the Sun leads you to the equinox and the break between night and day; its "white image" is free from opposites and the profusion of colors. Kşemarāja continues: "Having thus bowed to the Sun of Consciousness seated in the central domain by means of great penetration and the subtle penetration without pause."[54] His commentary goes on to say: "O Surya [Sun]! When you first arise, you drive away the darkness from the hearts of the devotees."[55] The Sun hymn continues: "O Sun (maker of the day), you create night and day, the unmanifest seed of the universe . . . O Sun, those who are fully awakened in the day illuminated by the light of Reality, or those who have entered the yogic sleep in the night of quieting the mind, having pierced through the light of the Sun at the juncture between day and night, full of supreme bliss, they attain the supreme state of *nirvana* (liberation)."[56]

Rumi also composed verses revering the Sun (*khūrshīd* or *āftāb*); here Rumi's direct focus is not Shams ("sun") but instead the elevated and supreme consciousness:

> Since I am the servant of the Sun, I have the same voice as the Sun, I am not the night, nor do I worship the night, which is the bedrock of dreams. (D: 1621)

> I was deluded, I am of uniform color like the Sun . . . (D: 1520)

> In the night of ignorance, the whole world is asleep; from the Sun of Love, our existence turned into day . . . (D: 816)

> Let us not to go to the east or to the west, in eternity all our steps are taken towards the primordial Sun. (D: 1344)

> The heart comes to terms with articulating its name and yet remains unrevealed until the dawn, when day makes the Sun show its face. (D: 757)

> The sentient beings have begun to dance little by little in joyful hearts before the Sun of all existence. (D: 979, 1124)

> Gracefully the Sun of Love sent its radiance from the eastern horizon, in the hearts of the beings who were powered by its intensity. (D: 1279)

> Don't tell any tale other than about Shams Tabrizi; don't talk about the moon since I am a Sun-worshipper (*khūrshīd parastīm*). (D: 1477)
>
> I am a Sun worshipper . . . who is the Sun? Say it is Shams, the truth of Tabriz, whose description does not fit in the pages of our discourse. (D: 2870, 3037)
>
> This is not the path leading to the Sun, O my existence, unless that Sun rises from within towards this lake. (D: 1854)
>
> I am the Sun of all suns; O you sun, go and set in the western horizon of my abode." (D: 1947)
>
> Enough! Hear the rest of the tales from the sun . . . (D: 2995)

Both Kşemarāja and Rumi use an analogy in which the Sun takes on the role of the master in relation to its disciple. Kşemarāja compares the Sun with the guru, self-manifesting to his disciples, the recipients of his light and grace, who also become self-luminous.[57] Rumi likewise writes:

> From the radiance of the light of the Sun, like the moon I became luminous and glorious. (D: 1570)
>
> Shams Tabrizi! From your Sun, I have become the moon; what more do I know? (D: 1579, 2040)
>
> . . . Like the moon following the luminous sun. (D: 2897)

Here Rumi alludes to the moon as the recipient and the disciple; the Sun-God hymn also reads: "I take refuge in the unlimited nectar of immortality present in the orb of the Sun, into which enters the moon." Shams himself, in his *Maqālāt,* also describes this master-disciple relationship eloquently in the context of the Sun-moon: "Rumi [Maulana] is the moon. No eye can see the Sun of my existence; its radiance can only reach Rumi. . . . The moon cannot attain the light of the Sun unless the Sun reaches out to the moon."[58]

In short, the reverence for the Sun shared by the Sun-God hymn (as interpreted by Kşemarāja) and hundreds of verses in Rumi's *Divan* could hardly be more similar.

* * *

Conclusion

All three Indian traditions discussed here—Upanishadic *advaita* Vedanta, Buddhism, and Kashmir Shaivism as well as Tantra—developed outside of the mainstream religiosity of Vedic Brahmanism. In the same way, Rumi's conceptions of non-dualism, non-self, the inner deity of Love, and the transformative power of dance and music developed on the fringe of mainstream Islamic legalism and theology. But for various cultural and even political reasons, although his unconventional ideas and practices did not fit well with Islamic dogma, Rumi has been appropriated by the Sufis, and despite much evidence to the contrary, over the years Rumi has been perceived as an "Islamic mystic."

These parallels appear even though the schools of Vedanta, Buddhism, and Tantra/Kashmir Shaivism and the philosophy of Shams and Rumi developed in different times and different geographical regions. While evidence is meager, it may be that the correlation between Rumi's practices and the other three schools explored here are a legacy of the spiritual intermingling and cross-influences of the mystics of the early Islamic era with their Indian counterparts in the eastern Iranian and Central Asian world, as well as in the Indian subcontinent, especially where Śaiva and Tantric influences on the Muslim mystics are concerned (see the appendix).

Rumi's words, emulating the Śaiva and Buddhist "Third Eye," hint to his readers that another eye is needed to understand the deeper world which he and other sages carried in their hearts: "Do not see me with the eyes on your head (*sar*); see me with the mystery (*sirr*) eye" (D: 1390). "I closed those two eyes so that I could open another eye" (D: 1409).

Conclusion

About 740 years ago, Rumi penned thousands of lines expressing his cognitive and spiritual understanding of existence. A small proportion of those lines have been popularly used to characterize Rumi as a Sufi, have made him famous, and have given rise to the sentimental mystical perceptions of him. A wide range of poems in which Rumi calls for equality of Muslims and non-Muslims, and those poems considered religiously debatable, have not yet received enough attention. Nor has his intention of mentioning the name *Shams* throughout his poetry been well understood. The objective of this book has been to see Rumi in a new light, as a philosopher, rebel, and thinker, alongside the existing narrative of his mysticism, as well as to reintroduce Shams based on his *Maqālāt*. It is important to examine Rumi's philosophy of non-dualism in a broader framework than previously, against a comparative background. Three critical aspects of this reenvisioning of Rumi have been covered in this book.

First, we reexamined Rumi's identity in connection with the Mevlevi order, which over the years after his death became accepted without question. As discussed in chapter 4, there is strong reason to believe that Rumi actually abandoned his theological duties and Sufi group practices. His connection with the Mevlevi order was in fact a post-construction by those who anachronously viewed Rumi as the founder of the order in response to the Islamic strictures of the Ottomans, who would not have accepted the novel ideas and practices that Rumi (and Shams) developed unless they were placed under an Islamic umbrella. The Mevlevi Sufi order due to its Islamic elements provided that cover.

Shams' and Rumi's rebellion against the scholastic and clerical establishment indicates to us that they rejected the transmission of the highest knowledge through hierarchy. Their lives demonstrated their belief that the quintessence of this knowledge can only be preserved when it is transmitted from guru to disciple directly, without the need for a Sufi fraternity or an organized religion. Their rebellion

was a silent one, powerful yet subtle. Rumi's (as well as Shams') anti-clerical sentiments[1] remained in the background as Rumi deftly used religious literature (*Masnavi*) to counter those who could oppose his nonconformist approach—a clever strategy to keep the clericalism of his time in check. Soon after Rumi's death, this rebellion began to lose its universal, philosophical paradigm. Through the formation of a Mevlevi order with a new hierarchical structure, the rebellion was soon legitimized in the Ottoman period and Rumi's philosophy was reduced to a Sufi subsect in the Islamic world.

Circumstantial evidence and the poetry of Sultan Valad indicate that Rumi had no interest in becoming the head of a new spiritual movement. By refusing to accept any disciples after meeting Shams, Rumi went against the usual path of hierarchical Sufism of the time; it is possible that he just did not want to form and lead such an order himself, but we cannot say if he opposed others forming another Sufi order or fraternity. Rumi's designation of Salāh al-Din and Husām al-Din as his mentors, rather than his disciples, was a strategy to shield himself from having to teach to a crowd again, contrary to the common hierarchical expectation. As Sultan Valad chronicles:

> O people and disciples (*yārān*), I am not your leader.
> Go away from me, and join Salāh al-Din.
> Since I have no intention of being a master (*sheikh*),
> I cannot find a bird who flies at the same level as me.
> I am content by myself in my solitude; I desire no one.
> Anyone around me is demanding, like annoying flies.[2]

Second, this book even though introductory, has brought to light a gravity of philosophy in Rumi's writings that far exceeds the modern sentimental or religious perception of his message. A philosophical structure for his writings presented here, the four-level pyramid, provides a way to analyze and categorize Rumi's philosophy more fully. At the peak of this pyramid is the non-dual, unifying concept of Love, representing the ultimate reality. The second level addresses how to understand and attain the immortal Love, while the third level analyzes the world of dualities and the distractions that distort the ultimate understanding of Love. Finally, the fourth or ground level of Rumi's pyramid accounts for worldly and human affairs, treating them as lessons on the path to awakening to the greater picture of life and human existence. To strengthen his philosophical postulation, Rumi offered new theories, as reflected in his *Masnavi*, combining spirituality and the empirical world as an inseparable pair, not settling

for the dry asceticism and the collapse of logical thinking that often occurs with dogmatic religious and even spiritual beliefs.

On a philosophical level, Rumi linked the complexity of the world of objects, human life, historical events, and highest human ideals. Above all, he focused on unraveling the riddle of the ultimate reality and analyzing human misperceptions of the intertwined inner and outer realities. To readers of his poetry, Rumi provides a new technique for interpreting the transitory, cyclical nature of life. As a remedy based on philosophy, Rumi's poetry aims to stimulate the vibration of consciousness in order to travel deeper and find Love, the permanent source of the repetitive and transitory cycle of life. Rumi's notion of immortal Love joining mortal human life represents a coupling of the permanent (*bāqī*) and impermanent (*fānī*). This concept can be allegorized as a film running on a screen: the impermanent scenes of human life are "projected" onto a blank white screen of existence, which is eternal and immutable (comparable to Plato's cave). To understand the nature of our own impermanency transposed against a permanent and unchanging principle requires an awareness that keeps the impermanent and permanent phenomena both in sight and in perspective.

Third, this book has introduced Rumi as an intercultural philosopher. Seeing Rumi's writings as philosophy rather than just "mystical poetry" also opens doors of comparison and allows one to identify certain parallels with the world's great non-dualistic philosophies, particularly ancient Asian traditions. Treating Rumi as a philosopher permits us to establish some parallels with concepts from *advaita* Vedanta, Buddhism, and Kashmiri Shaivism, particularly non-self philosophy, non-dualism, and the doctrine of liberation.

The expansion of the study of Rumi's philosophy, or even the many anthropological aspects of Rumi as a Universalist thinker, is long overdue. The person of Rumi and Rumian ideas are in fact the embodiment of the same goal; to study and distinguish them, the first was a time-bound person and a historical entity, and the second is an open realm and ongoing philosophy. In addition, further refinement of the four-level pyramidal classification of his philosophy should be undertaken. Rumi's massive writings deserve attention and scholarly study in the same philosophical way that, for example, the ideas and work of Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, Avicenna, and the Buddha are studied and taught in academia and debated in popular intellectual circles. It can be hoped that the path of Rumian studies,[3] which is part of the intellectual history of the East as well as of the Islamic world, is just beginning.

Appendix: Certain Influences of Shaivism and Tantra on the Islamic Mystics

In order to have an integrated understanding of the Śaivite and Tantric influences on certain mystical currents in the Islamic world, it behooves us to consider the need for a future comprehensive volume. This appendix is only a brief introduction to what may be buried or disguised in the memory of the past. The porous borders between the Indian and the Islamic worlds have always created inevitable cross-influences, which can no longer be overlooked.

In India, if the Sufis and yogic masters lived side by side, they must have intermingled and influenced one another. Certainly, various Hatha Yoga and Śaivite ideas became manifested in the practices of the Sufis in India as they absorbed non-Islamic elements.[1] Chroniclers record that in thirteenth-century Sind some dervish orders would gather in certain Śiva temples.[2]

Shaivism as a potent spiritual order assimilated many elements from other traditions. The multifaceted nature of some of its practices and universal conceptual ideas meant that Śaiva practices could be carried on under other names. And with its syncretic system of practices, Shaivism spread through north India, Central Asia, and Iran, "influencing both Qalandars and Sufis."[3] The strength of Shaivism's historical presence was such that the early Kushan dynasty (ca. 80–375), in what is now Afghanistan, adopted Shaivism alongside Buddhism: their coins depicted Śiva on one side and the Buddha on the other.[4] The archaeological evidence for the spread of Shaivism into Iran and Iraq is meagre, but it is epitomized by the presence of a Śiva statue in Iraq dating to pre-Islamic times.[5]

The Qalandars in Iran seem to have come under Śaiva influences, imitating them in wearing earrings and bracelets and behaving eccentrically; yet, like Muslims, the Qalandars still faced the *Kaʿba* in meditation.[6] The problem has always been when multiple eccentric groups

and individuals with transgressive practices and views within Islamic communities were considered "Sufis" when they were not, when in fact they rejected the Sufis' conventional religiosity and mundane piety.[7] Those who wanted to provide some sort of religious legitimacy for these "non-Sufi" groups—so that the absorption of practices from Yogic, Buddhist, Vedantic, Christian, and neo-Platonic sources could operate behind an Islamic mask, and, to a degree, become "unidentifiable"—would create genealogies to trace these groups' founders back to Mohammad, Abu Bakr, or 'Ali.[8] Some, thus, accepted the "Sufi" label, although the radical mystics such as the Qalandarīs in Western Asia did not.

In South Asia, various practices of Shaivism, Buddhism, and Tantra became quite prevalent. Bengal, because of the availability of the Sanskrit sources, became a region where the Sufis Islamized some of those practices—and the commonalities between Indian yogis and Sufis became apparent after the Muslim expansion into north India between the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.[9] In light of rich and intense spiritual developments in Northwest India, Central Asia, and Tibet, the Muslim conquest encountered many Tantric centers, especially in the Swat Valley (then known as Uddiyana—home of Padma Sambhava, the pioneer Tantric Buddhist who arrived in Tibet in the eighth century).[10] The Islamization of these regions in the eighth through tenth centuries did not eliminate the antinomian mystics from Muslim culture, just as it later did not stop the Qalandarī and their progenies. Geoffrey Samuel asserts that the antinomian practices of Tantra and Vajrayana Buddhism were adopted and continued in the Sufi context as early as the eighth and ninth centuries.[11]

The practice of yoga by the Shaivites of greater Khurāsān, and their intermingling with Muslim mystics, may have influenced what some Muslim mystics called *namāz ma'kus* (praying by hanging upside down, sometimes all evening or even all night). The renowned mystic Abu Sa'īd Abul-Khayr (d. ca. 1049) is believed to have done that while repeating *zikr* (a repetitive chant or prayer), which led to the state of *fanā al-fanā* (annihilation in annihilation).[12] To justify and legitimize this meditational yoga position, the Muslim mystics claimed that the Prophet of Islam was the first to perform it.[13] In Tantric yoga, this is considered the union of Śakti and Śiva, or the Sun and the Moon.[14] And Rumi, in fact, speaks of prostrating by standing on his head (D: 1603).

With his actions, Abu Sa'īd believed his body had now become *qibla* (the direction for prayer).[15] He set out on a new spiritual

path, dancing and encouraging feasts of sweet meat, roasted fowls, and all kinds of fruit—just what is usually offered in a Tantric feast (*ganachakra*). —But he had to explain to Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni (971–1030), who was informed about his practices, why his sermons did not include the teachings of the Prophet of Islam.[16]

Abu Sa'īd lived in the towns of Sarakhs and Mayhana, on the edge of Buddhist and Shaivite territories, and that may be where he learned the art of the spiritual feast, the feast with dance and singing, and other Tantric practices that gradually entered the Islamic territories. The following poem by Abu Sa'īd (which may actually have been written by Rumi: see chapter 4) is characteristic of his spiritually fearless and revolutionary attitude toward the religious thinking of his time:

> Not until every mosque beneath the Sun
> Lies ruined, will our holy work be done;
> And never will true Muslim appear
> Till faith and infidelity are one.[17]

Abu Sa'īd's challenge remained how to explain to his contemporaries the false human preoccupation with the subject of worshipping God.[18] It is asserted that Abu Sa'īd was heading to Mecca for pilgrimage but along the way was dissuaded by Abul-Hassan Kharaqānī (d. ca. 1033); he then returned to Bastām, the birthplace of Bāyazid (d. 874).[19] Abu Sa'īd's approach to loosening the burden of self was to offer meditation on non-self. This insightful meditation, according to him, should result in understanding that all things were created from non-self.[20] Abu Sa'īd preached explicitly against the boastful religious people who would constantly express their personal interpretation of things by saying, "I, I . . . ," whom he thought were trying to escape from reality, an act of self-centeredness that would lead to their wasting away.[21] Abu Sa'īd's praying upside down, sponsoring feasts, and non-self utterances are the recorded aspects of the outside influences he brought into the Islamic world; what went unrecorded were far more enigmatic interactions between the Tantric world and mysticism in Khurāsān.

In the Tantric context, it is also not surprising to learn about Kharaqānī (whose words were quoted in chapter 6A) and his two lions. He would ride on the backs of two lions he had domesticated, which was strange and frightening for the people of his village. Lion symbolism may have had a spiritual significance for Kharaqānī,[22] and it is common in many cultures and traditions. The closest of these to Khurāsān at that time was the Buddhist and Tantric symbolism

of taming a lion through attaining extraordinary power. In the Buddhist context, the lion symbolizes both the power of Buddha's teachings and his throne—a precursor to the Tibetan Tantric notion of the "Lion's Roar" (a fearless state of mind), and the basis for the spread of Tibetan iconography of the lion figure. In Indian Tantric iconography, a lion (or tiger) is ridden by the Goddess Durga (the personification of Kali, the great Cosmic Power), who is the conqueror of demons and darkness. Again, in Tantric practice, a lion guards each *chakra* (while each *chakra* is controlled by a goddess) and does not allow the yogi to access the *chakra*.[23]

'Attār dedicates over fifty pages to this evolutionary ascetic who seems to have remained at odds with traditional and institutional Sufism (perhaps in favor of a more Malāmatī type of practice).[24] He left no writing behind except for a handful of poems. 'Attār states that Kharaqānī's wife used to call him "an apostate and *zindīq*" because of his unusual and perhaps un-Islamic spiritual beliefs. This may have been because of what she witnessed in his practices, beliefs, and expressions, at least from her own Islamic point of view—she claimed she could not reveal all of them (see M: VI: 1120).

Kharaqānī, an extraordinary Sheikh whom Rumi depicts riding on the back of a lion, had a precedent in Bāyazid, who would also ride on a lion with a snake whip (M: VI: 1123–24).[25] Legend also attributes riding on a lion to Khidr, the mystical and immortal prophet, and he was followed by some unknown dervishes and Sufis in India being shown on the back of a tiger or lion.[26] In the Shi'a context, 'Ali, the son-in-law of the Prophet, has often been identified with a lion, symbolizing both his ferocity in battles and his astonishing power to tame such a ferocious beast in his native Arabia.[27] Lions continue to appear in the iconography of the Bektāshī Sufi order in Anatolia,[28] as well as in Qādiri order when the portrait of their founder, 'Abdel Qādir Jilānī (d. 1166) appears with a tamed lion seated before him.[29] The Tantric practice of taming and riding on lions has taken root in general Sufism and Shi'ism, as reflected in poetry, including that of Rumi.

The addition of transgressive behaviors to the practice of Sufism kept Sufis who adopted such practices under suspicion from the conservative jurists of Islam. The aim of changing physiology to release the energy of consciousness by committing sexual acts (such as the return of semen, see chapter 6B) and the manipulation of the respiratory system were not the only practices that prompted the fifteenth-century Sheikh Abdul-Quddus to say: "Unless the brain comes down to the foot, none can reach the doors of God."[30] Of course, in Northern India the Tantric Buddhists' worship of female deities

and transformation of sexual behavior by sublimation (as discussed in chapter 6B) were part of the approach to attain higher consciousness and superhuman powers and to be able to practice magic.[31] The respiration, *mantra* or *zikr*, visualization of the Sufi master, and the presence of *nūr-e mohammadi* (Mohammadan Light) were all parts of the meditational yogic practices—and all in the context of the Tantric conception of connecting the body as microcosm to the external universe, the celestial realm, rivers, mountains, and even social realities in order to master the external universe.[32]

The sexual aspects of Tantra were rejected as non-permissible and carried out by "wicked non-believers," but the unconventional Sufis justified them by invoking a *hadīth* from the Prophet and used Tantric yoga. This was possible because such Tantric yoga practices were so adaptable that so-called Sufis considered them natural components of Sufism.[33] Among the Bengali Qalandars, some of the Sufi and Tantric allegories and homologies became interchangeable, and the Sufis adapted and domesticated them for their own purposes. The Sufi *maqām* (stage) seems to have been adapted from the Tantric *chakra*, and to have replaced the *head* (intellect) in Sufi imagery with the *heart* as the throne of their own designated deity, visualized by simply displacing the Tantric deities.[34]

The possibility that the earlier Kubravi and Naqshbandi[35] orders of Central Asia borrowed various yogic practices; their similar adoption of the seven *chakras*, and using mantras to awaken certain *chakras*; and even the extraordinary claim that yoga might have been taught to the Prophet of Islam or that Mecca was a Śaiva center, not only would testify to the level of assimilation through intermingling, but also serves as a basis for ongoing debate about the cross-influences between the two traditions.[36]

In learning about the cross-influences, Carl Ernst has studied the translation of an Indian text, *Amrtakunda* or *The Pool of Nectar*, into Persian in Bengal in 1210 and its later translation into Arabic (as *Hawd ma' al-Hayat*). The book covers breath-control practices, Tantrism, Hatha Yoga, chants, *mantra*, postures for meditation, *Kundalini* meditation with seven *chakras*, the heart as the throne, the human microcosm and the external macrocosm, visualization, and the invocation of female deities.[37] Through the production of poetry as well as through this text, the Sufis became acquainted with Hatha Yoga.[38] In the course of translation, the book was Islamized, and did not treat "Hinduism as an autonomous religious system beyond the boundaries of Islam."[39] The adoption of *mantras* into an Islamic context, and further, into the practices of Tantra, were all part of the adjustment.

But interestingly, as Ernst points out, the Mevlevi order, along with other Sufi orders, in the course of their history continued to refer to the text of *The Pool of Nectar*.[40]

In conclusion, when it comes to putting the Shams-Rumi interactions into their proper context, the question remains as to how familiar Shams was with Tantra, Yoga, non-self philosophy, the Śiva tradition, and other practices—all of which might have traveled through a Qalandarī conduit—that provoked the traditional Sufis and ripped Rumi from all of his old (as Shams saw them), redundant, and stultifying practices and beliefs.

Notes

Chapter 1

1. Marilyn R. Waldman, "Primitive Mind/Modern Mind: New Approaches to an Old Problem Applied to Islam," in Richard C. Martin, ed., *Approaches to Islam in Religious Studies* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1985), 91–105.
2. The same argument applies to the teachings of Zen, which stems spontaneously between teacher and student and certainly outside of any fixed textual teachings. See Muso Kokushi, *Dream Conversations: On Buddhism and Zen*, translated by Thomas Cleary (Boston and London: Shambhala, 1994), 99.
3. The debate on non-dualism in the European context primarily focuses on different issues and topics such as "Language and the World." See Josef Mitterer, *Das Jenseits der Philosopie: Wider das dualistische Erkenntnisprinzip* (The Beyond of Philosophy: Against the Dualistic Principle of Cognition), Wien: Passagen Verlag, 1992. An analysis of Mitterer's non-dualism is discussed in Peter Kügler, "Non-dualism versus Conceptual Relativism, Constructivist Foundations," *Constructivist Foundations* 8, no. 2 (2013), 247–52.
4. Metaphor borrowed from a poem by Hātif Esfahānī (d. 1783).
5. There are also Indian dualistic traditions, such as *dvaita* (dual) Vedanta, in which reality is composed of two principles: Brahman, or Viśnu, and the real universe.
6. See Ali Anooshahr, *The Ghazi Sultans and the Frontiers of Islam: A Comparative Study of the Late Medieval and Early Modern Periods* (London and New York: Routledge, 2009).
7. Hossein Ziai, "Illuminationism," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, originally published December 15, 2004, last updated March 27, 2012, accessed September 24, 2014.
8. Toshihiko Izutsu, *Sufism and Taoism: The Key Philosophical Concepts* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984).
9. Shams al-Din Ahmed, al-Aflaki al-'Arefi, *Menāqib al-'Ārefīn*, ed. Tahsin Yazici (Tehran: Donya-ye Ketab, 1362/1983), 436.

10. See Mehdi Aminrazavi, "Rumi on Tolerance: A Philosophical Analysis," *Mawlana Rumi Review* 2 (2011), 47–60 (English version). *Iran Nameh* 25, nos. 1 and 2 (2009), 13–25 (Persian version). (I am thankful to Prof. Aminrazavi for having brought to my attention the philosophical aspects of Rumi's poetry and for sharing his article with me.)
11. In certain *ghazals*, Rumi speaks about the experience of Love for which even Plato has to unlearn his knowledge (D: 2203, 2649).

CHAPTER 2

1. A term used by the Nigerian novelist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's in her 2009 TED talk, "The Danger of a Single Story," http://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story, accessed April 15, 2014.
2. For an argument concerning the problems of producing a sound historical narrative, see Marilyn Robinson Waldman, "The Otherwise Unnoteworthy Year 711: A Reply to Hayden White," *Critical Inquiry* 7, no. 4 (Summer 1981), 784–92.
3. See Mostafa Vaziri, *Buddhism in Iran: An Anthropological Approach to Traces and Influences* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), chapter 8.
4. H. M. Ilahi-Ghomshei, for example, is a modern Iranian scholar who has entertained his Iranian (as well as Western) audience with the religious dimension of Rumi's poetry and the religiosity of his views overall, using his vast knowledge of Western literature as well as Koranic and Persian literature. Ilahi-Ghomshei significantly emphasizes his own personal religious logic by ignoring the non-religious poems of Rumi, with their philosophical implications, and instead providing his own religious conclusions based only on the selected religious poems. His lectures on Rumi are collected in a book, *365 Days in the Discourse of Rumi (Maulana)*. See Husayn Muhi al-Din Ilahi-Ghomshei, *Si-sad o Shast o Panj Rouz Dar Sohbat-e Maulana* (Tehran: Nashr Sokhan, 1386/2007). See the introduction, 9–30, for the author's disjointed presentation of Rumi. The rest of Ghomshei's book is simply Rumi's poetry with Ghomshei's glossary and occasional commentaries. For Ghomshei's religious interpretation of the "Religion of Love," see Husayn Ilahi-Ghomshei, "The Principles of the Religion of Love in Classical Persian Poetry," translated by Leonard Lewisohn, in *Hafiz and the Religion of Love in Classical Persian Poetry*, ed. Leonard Lewisohn (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2010), 77–106; see especially the conclusion of the chapter.
5. From earlier authors such as R. A. Nicholson and E. G. Browne to later ones such as Annemarie Schimmel, S. H. Nasr, William Chittick, and Alessandro Bausani, many have argued convincingly that Rumi was a great Islamic mystic, and their academic authority convinced a generation of Rumi admirers that he *was* an Islamic mystic/Sufi. The Persophile and Islamophile tendencies of these and similar authors, interpreting Rumi as

a Sufi, have prevented a broader or alternative Rumi narrative from being considered. Certain modern religiously minded authors have portrayed Rumi as the revelator and scriber of "the Koran in Persian language," while at the same time such authors have not been able to curb their own paradoxical approach to Rumi's as well as to Shams' unreligious and uncompromising stance against scholasticism and other dogmatic matters of religion, especially Shams.

6. An exception is Franklin D. Lewis, a major scholar of Persian literature, who has thoroughly employed the primary sources, including the *Maqālāt* of Shams.
7. Shams al-Din Ahmed al-Aflaki al-'Arefi, *Menāqib al-'Ārefīn*, vol. 1, ed. Tahsin Yazici (Tehran: Donya-ye Ketab, 1362/1983); see also the introduction by Jafar Modarress Sādeghi, ed., to *Maqālāt Shams* (Tehran: Nashr-e Markaz, 1373/1994), xx. For some references about the biographers, see also Franklin D. Lewis, *Rumi: Past and Present, East and West: The Life, Teaching and Poetry of Jalāl al-Din Rumi* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2008, first published in 2000), 143, 146, 185.
8. See Tahsin Yazici, "AFLĀKĪ, author of texts on the virtues of Jalāl-al-dīn Rūmī and his disciples (13th–14th centuries)," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, December 1984, updated March 2013, accessed January 15, 2014.
9. Lewis, *Rumi*, 134–35.
10. Claimed by Partow 'Alavi in Jalal al-Din Humai, *Kulliyāt Divan-i Shams Tabrizi* (Tehran: Entesharat Safi Ali Shah, 1377/1998, 12th ed., first published in 1335/1956), 123.
11. Izad Goshasb, xviii. The first complete *Masnavi* of the Ottoman lands appeared in Egypt in 1835 under the Ottomans, another edition in Tabriz in 1847, then Bombay in 1850–51, Lucknow in 1865, and Tehran in 1856; see Lewis, 310. It was R. A. Nicholson who edited and finalized the *Masnavi* in eight volumes in 1925–1940, a version that is in use today in Iran.
12. Asadullah Izad Goshasb, *Jazabiyyāt-e Ilāhiyya* (with an introduction by Bastani Parizi, and the work completed by Abdol Baqi Izad Goshasb) (Tehran: Chap Khajeh, 1319/1940, reprinted in 1378/1999), xviii.
13. Humai, *Kulliyāt Divan-i Shams Tabrizi*, 89.
14. See Lewis, 555; see also Izad Goshasb, xviii.
15. See Nevit O. Ergin and Will Johnson, *The Forbidden Rumi: The Suppressed Poems of Rumi on Love, Heresy, and Intoxication* (Vermont: Inner Traditions, 2006), 165–66.
16. Lewis, *Rumi,* 136.
17. See Sādeghi, xxv–xxvi. (The text of the *Maqālāt* is written in the voice of Shams in the first-person singular, without the interference of the author, who was transcribing the words: xxx–xxxi.)
18. The transmission of the *Maqālāt* in multiple handwritten manuscript versions in Konya over the course of several centuries may have occurred for one of two reasons: either there were addendums to the original version

of the *Maqālāt*, manufactured by later Mevlevi dervishes, or they are actually authentic parts of the original version that slowly surfaced from their secret holdings. There is an English translation, by Refik Algan and Camille Adams-Helminski, of one of the existing manuscripts of the *Maqālāt* previously kept in the museum in Konya and now in Ankara: *Rumi's Sun: The Teachings of Shams of Tabriz* (Sandpoint, ID: Morning Light Press, 2008).

CHAPTER 3

1. See Sultan Valad, *Ebtidā Nāmeh*, ed. Mohammad Ali Movvahed and Alireza Haydari (Tehran: Entesharat Kharazmi, 1389/2010), 57–61, 64, 67–69.
2. Mohammad Ali Movvahed, who edited, annotated, and introduced *Maqālāt Shams-e Tabrizi* (Tehran: Entesharat Kharazmi, 1369/1990), has done an exhaustive and fantastic job studying and comparing multiple versions of *Maqālāt*, from the earliest version written down by Sultan Valad to other versions available in museums and libraries in modern Turkey. His edited and annotated version, used in this chapter, is the most comprehensive one so far available to us. In later manuscript versions, there seem to be additions to Valad's original version, made by different "Ottoman" dervishes/authors, including some in which Shams is mentioned in the third person. In one of these, for instance, Shams encourages Rumi not to procrastinate about writing down what he needs to write down (686).
3. *Maqālāt Shams-e Tabrizi* (hereafter referred to as *Maqālāt*), 163.
4. See Shams al-Din Ahmed al-Aflaki al-'Arefi, *Menāqib al-'Ārefīn*, vol. 1, ed. Tahsin Yazici (Tehran: Donya-ye Ketab, 1362/1983), 85.
5. Aflaki al-'Arefi, *Menāqib al-'Ārefīn*, vol. 1, 85; vol. 2, 631.
6. Shams makes a reference to this in his *Maqālāt*. Otherwise, he would knit trouser belts for a living. See the first biography of Rumi, by Fereydoun ibn Ahmad Sepahsalar, *Resāeh Sepahsalar*, introduction and annotation by Mohammad Afshin Vafaei (Tehran: Entesharat Sokhan, 2nd ed., 1387/2008), 104.
7. See Mohammad Reza Shafi'i Kadkani, *Qalandariya dar Tārīkh* (Tehran: Sokhan, 1386/2007), 137–40. Jāmi considerd the Qalandarī sect the progeny of the Malāmatī movement and labels them as *zindīq* (heretic), 137–41.
8. Shafi'i Kadkani, *Qalandariya dar Tārīkh*, 56–57, 61, 65–66, 192.
9. Shafi'i Kadkani, *Qalandariya dar Tārīkh*, 74, 104.
10. Farhad Daftary, "Sectarian and National Movements in Iran, Khurasan and Transoxania During Umayyad and Early 'Abbasid Times," in *History of Civilizations of Central Asia*, vol. 4, part 2, ed. C. E. Bosworth and M. S. Asimov (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 2003; first published by UNESCO, 2000), 51. The Mazdakis are conceived, although not everyone agrees, to have exerted influence on Bātinī-Ismā'īlīs, Qarmatīs,

and other extremist Shi'i groups. See also W. Sundermann, "Neue Erkenntnisse über die mazdakitische Soziallehre," *Das Altertum* 34/31 (988), 183–88; Patricia Crone, *The Nativist Prophets of Early Islamic Iran: Rural Revolt and Local Zoroastrianism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

11. A. Bausani, "Religion Under the Mongols," in *The Cambridge History of Iran*, vol. 5, ed. J. A. Boyle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968, reprinted 2001), 548.
12. Christiane Tortel, *L'Ascète et le Bouffon: qalandars, vrai ou faux renonçants en islam ou l'Orient indianisé* (Arles: Actes Sud, 2009), 27–29, 71, 72–76, 77–80.
13. Tortel, *L'Ascète et le Bouffon*, 195.
14. Tortel, *L'Ascète et le Bouffon*, 129–37, 173–75.
15. Lloyd Ridgeon, "Shaggy or Shaved? The Symbolism of Hair among Persian Qalandar Sufis," *Iran and the Caucasus* 14, no. 2 (2010): 241.
16. Ridgeon, "Shaggy or Shaved? . . .," 243, 248.
17. *Menāqib al-ʿĀrefīn*, 412; see also Ridgeon, "Shaggy or Shaved? . . .," 237; see also M. Vaziri, *Buddhism in Iran* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 144–48.
18. *Menāqib al-ʿĀrefīn*, 412, also quoted in Zarrinkoob, *Josteju dar Tassawwuf Iran*, 363.
19. Tortel, *L'Ascète et le Bouffon*, 86–88.
20. Ridgeon, "Shaggy or Shaved? . . .," 242.
21. Non-Sufi antinomian practices went on for another three hundred years after Shams. The Jalālī dervishes continued the ascetical eccentricity of living in caves among their various antinomian practices. To give their sect an intellectual dimension, they produced a *Masnavī* (couplets), called *Tarāsh Nāmeh* (The Book of Shaving): see Abdol Hosein Zarrinkoob, *Josteju dar Tassawwuf Iran* (Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1369/1990), 375. In order to justify the shaving practice, though there was no Koranic basis for it, the Jalālī dervishes in the book of *Tarāsh Nāmeh* claimed that the Prophet Mohammad had encouraged the community of the pious to maintain a tradition of shaving in Islam: see Shafi'i Kadkani, *Qalandariya dar Tārīkh*, 414–20. Some have claimed that there is a transmitted tradition that before the pilgrimage the Prophet would shave his head and distribute his hair to the pilgrims in Mecca: see Brannon Wheeler, *Mecca and Eden: Ritual, Relics and Territory in Islam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 72. In one tradition, the shaving of all facial hair was an act of repentance by Adam after he was expelled from heaven and landed in the island of Serendīp (Sri Lanka): see Ridgeon, "Shaggy or Shaved? . . .," 244. Perhaps the requirement for Muslim pilgrims on the Hajj to shave their heads has a related historical background: see Vaziri, *Buddhism in Iran*, 95. The intention of maintaining an ascetical culture without being tightly entangled with Islamic ritualism and traditional Sufism led such eccentric spiritual groups to

carry on some of the old practices pioneered by the Malāmatīs, then the Qalandarīs, and later the Jalālīs. The new Khāksarīyya eventually branched out to ascetic sects of Fatiyān or Futuwwat Sufis: see Zarrinkoob, *Justeju dar Tassawwuf Iran,* 338, 345 (Pouryā-i Valī, a moderate poet who combined his Malamātī and Futuwwat principles with physical conditioning, later on became a model of perfection among the adherents: 353). A comprehensive study of Futuwwat Sufism is by Lloyd Ridgeon, *Morals and Mysticism in Persian Sufism: A History of Sufi-futuwwat in Iran* (New York, Oxford: Routledge, 2010). But generally the Qalandarīs simply came to be considered outsiders in comparison to those who came to be known as Sufis: see Zarrinkoob, *Justeju dar Tassawwuf Iran*, 359–61.

22. Ahmet Karamustafa, *God's Unruly Friends: Dervish Groups in the Islamic Later Middle Period 1200–1550* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1994), 56, 93.
23. See Karamustafa, *God's Unruly Friends*, 13–14, 20–23, 43.
24. Ahmet Karamustafa, *Sufism: The Formative Period* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 66–67.
25. There is reference about hashish smoking of those around Shams: see Shams al-Din Ahmed al-Aflaki al-'Arefi, *Menāqib al-'Ārefīn*, vol. 2, ed. Tahsin Yazici (Tehran: Donya-ye Ketab, 1362/1983), 632–33.
26. Karamustafa, *Sufism*, 164–65. "Sanā'ī" was his title, and comes from the Persian word *sanā*, meaning "light." Since the Manichaean groups who were disguised and underground in Khurāsān from the ninth century onward were quite vigorous and influential, it is conceivable that the notion of "light" in the Manichaean tradition may have had something to do with calling him by that name.
27. Karamustafa, *Sufism*, 33, 35.
28. Karamustafa, *Sufism*, 166.
29. Karamustafa, *God's Unruly Friends*, 33. From here onward, the principle of "Love" will be capitalized to emphasize its meaning and significance for Shams and Rumi.
30. Tahsin Yazici, "ČELEBĪ, 'ĀREF," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, December 1990, accessed January 10, 2014.
31. Karamustafa, *God's Unruly Friends*, 20, 82.
32. For the antinomian practices and anti-legalistic attitudes of Shams and similar Sufis, see Mehdi Aminrazavi, "Antinomian Tradition in Islamic Mysticism," *The Bulletin of the Henry Martyn Institute of Islamic Studies* 4/1–2 (Jan.–Jun. 1995), 18–19.
33. Shams alludes to Jesus as an ascetic who would run away from this material world the way a mouse would run away from a cat: see *Maqālāt*, 744.
34. *Maqālāt*, 93, 162–63.
35. *Maqālāt*, 249.
36. *Maqālāt*, 249.
37. *Maqālāt*, 287, 646.

38. The word *mu'min* refers to the "faithful." *Muslim*, a term meaning *submission* to the will of God, is a later evolution from the Koranic legend of Abraham submitting to the will of God to sacrifice his son. Thus, the terms *Islam* and *Muslim* replaced *mu'min* sometime in the seventh century, most likely to accommodate the political structure and as a means of distancing Muslims from Jews and Christians, particularly the Jews who shared similar faith. For a detailed discussion of this, see M. M. Bravmann, *The Spiritual Background of Early Islam* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1972).
39. *Maqālāt*, 701.
40. *Maqālāt*, 662.
41. *Maqālāt*, 645.
42. See, e.g., D: 477, 525, 638.
43. *Maqālāt*, 128, 288. Shams says a hundred thousand people like Razi cannot even be compared to the dust under the feet of mystics like Bāyazīd. Rumi composed verses in the same vein about Fakhr Razi (M: V: 1020).
44. *Maqālāt*, 210.
45. *Maqālāt*, 613, 716.
46. *Maqālāt*, 714.
47. *Maqālāt*, 299, 304–5.
48. *Maqālāt*, 134.
49. *Maqālāt*, 270.
50. *Maqālāt*, 694.
51. *Maqālāt*, 84.
52. *Maqālāt*, 185–86, 262, 280, 285.
53. See also *Maqālāt*, 182–83.
54. *Maqālāt*, 304.
55. *Maqālāt*, 287.
56. *Maqālāt*, 296–97; see also 82, 274–75.
57. *Menāqib al-ʿĀrefīn*, 466–67.
58. *Maqālāt*, 272.
59. *Maqālāt*, 634.
60. *Maqālāt*, 285.
61. *Maqālāt*, 308–9; see also 322.
62. *Maqālāt*, 184.
63. This is also similar to the Buddhist school of Madhyamaka—two truths: one, worldly or conventional truth; the other, ultimate truth.
64. *Maqālāt*, 212–13.
65. Aminrazavi, "Antinomian. . . . ," 19
66. *Maqālāt*, 652–63, 747.
67. *Maqālāt*, 144.
68. *Maqālāt*, 170, 226, 747; see also 309–10. (During Shams' lifetime, Christians were quite populous in Anatolia.)
69. *Maqālāt*, 616–17.

70. *Maqālāt*, 144.
71. *Maqālāt*, 646, 728; this is emphasized in al-Aflaki al-'Arefi, *Menāqib al-'Ārefīn*, vol. 2, 666.
72. *Maqālāt*, 141, 143–44.
73. *Maqālāt*, 127, 155.
74. *Maqālāt*, 173.
75. *Maqālāt*, 114.
76. Franklin D. Lewis, "GOLESTĀN-E SA'DI," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, published December 15, 2001, last updated February 14, 2012, accessed September 24, 2014.
77. D: 332, 503, 617, 648.
78. D: 176.
79. *Maqālāt*, 223.
80. *Maqālāt*, 224.
81. *Maqālāt*, 737; see also D: 2000; M: IV: 739–40.
82. *Maqālāt*, 627, 748.
83. *Maqālāt*, 338, 607.
84. *Maqālāt*, 126.
85. *Maqālāt*, 298.
86. *Maqālāt*, 191.
87. *Maqālāt*, 739.
88. *Maqālāt*, 302, 637.
89. *Maqālāt*, 294; see also 218.
90. Aflaki al-'Arefi, *Menāqib al-'Ārefīn*, vol. 2, 621–22.
91. *Maqālāt*, 746, 753, 773; see also M: I: 6 (*bādeh az mā mast shod ney mā az oo*).
92. *Maqālāt*, 644.
93. al-Aflaki al-'Arefi, *Menāqib al-'Ārefīn*, vol. 2, 632–33.
94. *Maqālāt*, 72–73, 78, 80, 214.
95. *Maqālāt*, 623.
96. *Maqālāt*, 221.
97. *Maqālāt*, 221.
98. See M: II: 253, 282; M: IV: 770–73; VI: 1134.
99. *Maqālāt*, 313; see also D: 357
100. *Maqālāt*, 181–82.
101. *Maqālāt*, 121, 139, 211, 231.
102. *Maqālāt*, 657.
103. *Maqālāt*, 111.
104. *Maqālāt*, 307.
105. *Maqālāt*, 192; see also M: III: 477.
106. *Maqālāt*, 313, 314.
107. D: 132, 150, 172, 182, 438, 483, etc.
108. *Maqālāt*, 748. Here Shams rejects the notion of the Koran as eternal and equal to God that *Mu'tazila*, the speculative rationalist school of theology, had put forward, by asking, "How could the inscriber (*nāsikh*) and the inscription (*mansoukh*) be eternal at the same time?"

109. *Maqālāt*, 691; see also 728. Shams believed the prophetic *hadīths* contained more substantive content and enigma than the verses of the Koran: see 650.
110. *Maqālāt*, 223. See chapter 5A for Rumi's numerous references regarding the sun and its absoluteness without a fixed location in either the east or the west.
111. *Maqālāt*, 226.
112. As an example, see Alessandro Bausani, "Theism and Pantheism in Rumi," *Iranian Studies* 1, no. 1 (Winter 1968), 8–24. Bausani is led to believe that Rumi's metaphors and those in Persian literature are the source of misinterpretation and that Rumi is a firm Muslim and a theist 20.
113. *Maqālāt*, 134; see also M: I: 194; III: 461, 536; I: 72.
114. *Maqālāt*, 194. This anecdote is a Buddhist *jataka*; see Vaziri, *Buddhism in Iran*, 47–48, 52.
115. *Maqālāt*, 266; see also M: IV: 661.
116. *Maqālāt*, 245, 648.
117. *Maqālāt*, 115. The metaphor of bow and arrow can also be found in *Munaka Upanishad*: "Om is the bow, the arrow is the individual being, and Brahman is the target."
118. D: 732; see also 373, 1691.
119. *Maqālāt*, 91.
120. *Maqālāt*, 188, 231, 319, 608–9.
121. *Maqālāt*, 690.
122. D: 833; see also 1007, 1077. See also M: I: 44–45.
123. D: 232.
124. *Maqālāt*, 219–20.

CHAPTER 4

1. "Baba" in twelfth- and thirteenth-century Anatolia referred to a shaman/extreme Shi'i who led the Turkmen in *jihad* against the local Christians. Apart from its Qalandarī (Bektāshī) use, "Baba" has usually referred to certain Indian fakirs and yogis.
2. He may have been an adherent of Kubravi order: see Devin DeWeese, "The Eclipse of the Kubravīya in Central Asia," *Iranian Studies* 21, nos. 1/2 (1988), 50–51, 66, 70.
3. Asadullah Izad Goshasb, *Jazabiyyāt-e Ilāhiyya* (with introduction by Bastani Parizi and the work completed by Abdol Baqi Izad Goshasb) (Tehran: Chap Khajeh, 1319/1940, reprinted in 1378/1999), xxix.
4. In some poems Rumi tells us about Shams' arrival in the month of *hamal* (in the Balkh—and present-day Afghan—calendar), which corresponds to March. See D: 73, 1028, 1334.
5. *Maqālāt*, 690; see also Shams al-Din Ahmed al-Aflaki al-'Arefi, *Menāqib al-'Ārefīn*, ed. Tahsin Yazici (Tehran: Donya-ye Ketab, 1362/1983), 82.
6. Rumi, *Fīhi mā fīh*, 207, refers to Burhan al-Din reciting Sanā'ī frequently.

7. Izad Goshasb, xxix.
8. *Maqālāt*, 730, 732.
9. Aflaki al-'Arefi, *Menāqib al-'Ārefīn*, vol. 2, 691.
10. Izad Goshasb, 66 or lxvi.
11. Upon his arrival, Shams spent the first six months in Salah al-Din's shop, where Rumi met him regularly. The discussions were assumed to be about *sama'*, its outcome, and the "unrevealed" topics; these were the meetings that no one else was allowed to attend. See Sepahsalar, *Resāleh Sepahsalar*, 108. However, Aflaki mentions in the second round that, when Shams returned from Damascus, they spent six months of intense discussion together; see Aflaki al-'Arefi, *Menāqib al-'Ārefīn*, vol. 2, 691.
12. Examples from *Maqālāt* are found in Aflaki al-'Arefi, *Menāqib al-'Ārefīn*, vols. 1 and 2, 314, 317, 634, 648, 659, 662, 666, 669–672, 676–77.
13. See Tahsin Yazici, "AFLĀKĪ, author of texts on the virtues of Jalāl-al-dīn Rūmī and his disciples (13th–14th centuries)," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, December 1984, updated March 2013, accessed January 20, 2014.
14. For Aflaki's excessive exaggerations, see Aflaki al-'Arefi, *Menāqib al-'Ārefīn*, 91, 174–75, 214.
15. Aflaki al-'Arefi, *Menāqib al-'Ārefīn*, vol. 2, 700; see also Lewis, *Rumi: Past and Present*, 185. Shams could not have been murdered under Rumi's close observation. Furthermore, Sultan Valad's poem provides ample evidence that after the second disappearance of Shams, Rumi travelled to Damascus to look for him. See *Ebtidā Nāmeh*, 71–72.
16. See the introduction by Mohammad Afshin Vafaei to Fereydoun ibn Ahmad Sepahsalar's *Resāleh Sepahsalar* (Tehran: Entesharat Sokhan, 2nd ed., 1387/2008), iv–v, vi.
17. See the introduction by Jaafar Modarress Sādeghi, ed., to *Maqālāt Shams* (Tehran: Nashr-e Markaz, 1373/1994), xx. For some references about the biographers, see also Lewis, op. cit., 143, 146, 185.
18. In the *Maqālāt*: see chapter 3 of the present volume.
19. Sepahsalar, *Resāleh Sepahsalar*, 108.
20. Abdol Hossein Zarrinkoob, *Pel-e Pel-e tā Molāqāt-e Khodā: Dar Bāreh Zendegī, Andīshe va Suluk Maulānā Jalal al-Din Rumi* (Tehran: Entesharat 'Elmi, 14th ed., 1379/2000), 170–71.
21. In the introduction by Mohammad Ali Movvahed, *Maqālāt-e Shams-i Tabrizi* (Tehran: Kharazmi Publishers, 1369/1990), 23 notes, quoting *Masnavi* of *Robāb Nāmeh* of Sultan Valad.
22. Sultan Valad, *Ebtidā Nāmeh*, 53–56; see also Movvahed, *Maqālāt*, 20–22.
23. Franklin D. Lewis, *Rumi: Past and Present, East and West* (Oxford, Boston: Oneworld, 2000), 172, 312. The dance (waving the hand, stamping the feet, and circling about) practiced in mystical circles at the time of Abu Sa'id Abul-Khayr was well known in eastern Iran, and according to

Hujwīrī, the Prophet had allowed singing and playing melodies; in other words, dancing was endorsed by Hujwīrī. See Lewis, 309, 310.

24. Sultan Valad, *Ebtidā Nāmeh*, 67–68; see also 64, 71. See also Aflaki al-'Arefi, *Menāqib al-'Ārefīn*, 89.
25. Ahmet Karamustafa, *God's Unruly Friends: Dervish Groups in the Islamic Later Middle Period 1200–1550* (Salt Lake City: University Utah Press, 1994), 81–82. On the other hand, a parallel group of Mevlevi followers under Sultan Valad (d. 1312) took a more conformist direction: see 82.
26. Zarrinkoob, *Pel-e Pel-e tā Molāqāt-e Khodā*, 284–85.
27. *Maqālāt*, 681, 770, 773.
28. *Maqālāt*, 681.
29. Sultan Valad, *Ebtidā Nāmeh*, 126: "The Christians saw in him their Jesus, the Jews said he is our Moses. The Muslims (*mu'min*) called him the secret and the light of the messenger."
30. This poem in some sources is attributed (perhaps erroneously) to Abu Said Abu'l-Khayr (d. 1049). See R. A. Nicholson, *The Mystics of Islam*, 90; Ignaz Goldziher, *Vorlesungen Über den Islam* (Heidelberg, 1910), 172.

    Not until every mosque beneath the Sun
    Lies ruined, will our holy work be done;
    And never will true Muslim appear
    Till faith and infidelity are one.

31. Rumi has been claimed to be a sympathizer of an important Central Asian ascetic/mystical group of the thirteenth century, the Kubravi: see Hamid Algar, "Kobrawiya ii, the order," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, July 15, 2009, accessed August 2013. Burhān al-Din Tirmidhī, Rumi's mentor for the first ten years, was an alleged follower of the Kubravi order: see Izad Goshasb, xxviii. Others have also claimed that Rumi had come under the influence of Ibn 'Arabi.
32. Izad Goshasb, xxviii. Lewis mentions that Burhān had no Sufi affiliation and Burhān does not refer to any specific Sufi school: see Lewis, *Rumi*, 104.
33. Lewis, *Rumi*, 106.
34. See A. Karamustafa, *God's Unruly Friends*. Other mystical groups such as the Malāmatīs, Qalandarīs, and Karrāmīs were also spiritually active within the Islamic community.
35. Hajji Bektāsh, born in Khurāsān (d. ca. 1271), may have been a Qalandar, but his Shi'a genealogy could have been a later Safavid fabrication due to the infiltration of Shi'a Qizilbāsh into Bektāshī order during their suppression by the Ottomans: see Hamid Algar, "BEKTĀŠ, HĀJĪ," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, December 15, 1989, accessed June 20, 2014. See also Hamid Algar, "BEKTĀŠĪYA," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, December 15, 1989, accessed June 20, 2014. Aflaki reports that Rumi had personally

met Hajji Bektāsh of Khurāsān and had noticed his lack of interest in Islamic practices and following the religious path: see Aflaki al-'Arefi, *Menāqib al-'Āref'īn*, 381, 383, 498.

36. See F. W. Hasluck, "Studies in Turkish History and Folk-Legend," *The Annual of the British School at Athens* 19 (1912/1913), 208, 210, 213n5, 214–15, 216, 218.
37. The suspicion of the Bektāshīs by the Ottomans was due to the Shi'a elements present in their order: see Hamid Algar, "BEKTĀŠĪYA," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, December 15, 1989, accessed June 20, 2014.
38. A. C. S. Peacock, "Sufis and the Seljuk Court in Mongol Anatolia: Politics and Patronage in the Works of Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī and Sultān Walad," in A. C. S. Peacock and Sara Nur Yıldız, eds., *The Seljuks of Anatolia: Court and Society in the Medieval Middle East* (London: IB Tauris, 2013), 206–7.
39. Aflaki al-'Arefi, *Menāqib al-'Āref'īn*, vol. 2, 622–23.
40. M. I. Waley, "BAHĀ'-AL-DĪN SOLṬĀN WALAD," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, December 1988, updated August 2011, accessed January 10, 2014.
41. Similar political patronage was given to the practitioners of the Buddha's *dharma* by the third Mauryan Emperor, Asoka, in the third century BCE; otherwise the Buddha's teachings would have remained in the shadow as a sub-sect of the dominant Brahmanism.
42. See Peacock, "Sufis and the Seljuk Court in Mongol Anatolia: Politics and Patronage in the Works of Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī and Sultān Walad," 209, 220.
43. Waley, "BAHĀ'-AL-DĪN SOLṬĀN WALAD," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*.
44. Waley, "BAHĀ'-AL-DĪN SOLṬĀN WALAD," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*.
45. Tahsin Yazici, "ČELEBĪ, 'ĀREF," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, December 1990, accessed January 10, 2014.
46. For this discussion, see M. Vaziri, *Buddhism in Iran*, chapter 8. See also Ahmet Karamustafa, *Sufism: The Formative Period* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 66.
47. Iraq is where the term "Sufism" as we know it emerged in the late seventh century. The true origin of "Sufi" is as yet unresolved. Regarding the word *suf*, Birunī explained that it meant "wisdom" in Greek (*soph*), but "in later times the word was corrupted by misspelling, so that finally it was taken for a derivation from *suf*, i.e. the *wool* of goats." See *Alberuni's India*, trans. Edward C. Sachau, vol. 1 (London, 1910), 34. However, Nöldeke raises doubts as to whether the Greek word *soph* can be established as ever having any usage in Asia. And "Sufis" did not necessarily wear woolen clothes, although the Sufis were recognized by the way they were dressed. See Theodor Nöldeke, "Sūfī," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 48 (1894), 45–47.

48. Michael Morony, *Iraq After the Muslim Conquest* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 401.
49. Morony, *Iraq,* 401, 405.
50. *Alberuni's India*, 34.
51. The famous ecstatic Iraqi Sufi, Ma'rūf Karkhī (d. 815), may have been brought up as a Sabian (Mandaean) or a Christian in Mesopotamia. See R. A. Nicholson, *A Literary History of the Arabs* (New York, 1907), 385; Nicholson, "A Historical Enquiry Concerning the Origin and Development of Sufiism," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (April 1906), 306; A. H. Hujwīrī, *Kashf ul-Mahjūb: The Oldest Persian Treatise on Sufism*, trans. and ed. Reynold A. Nicholson (Lahore Edition: Zaki Enterprises, 2002), 114, mentions Ma'rūf was born as non-Muslim—*bégāna* (outsider or stranger to Islam), referring to a person outside the biblical religions; F. 'Attār, *Taḍkirat ul-Aulīyā*, ed. Mohammad Este'lami (Tehran: Entesharat Zavvar, 8th ed., 1374/1995), 324, mentions Ma'rūf's parents were Christians.
52. See Nathaniel Deutsch, "Mandaean Literature," *The Gnostic Bible*, ed. Willis Barnstone and Marvin Meyer (Boston and London: Shambhala, 2003), 528. Hafiz's poem about Adam is reminiscent of certain Mandean belief: "I was a king and my throne was paradise, it was Adam who brought me to this ruined and impermanent world."
53. For a more detailed discussion of this, see Vaziri, *Buddhism in Iran*, chapter 8.
54. Jawid Mojaddedi, *Beyond Dogma: Rumi's Teachings on Friendship with God and Early Sufi Theories* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 112.
55. Sultan Valad, *Ebtidā Nāmeh,* 74, 76. Sultan Valad wrote of Rumi advising the former disciple: "I cannot concentrate on you, go away from me, go and give your pledge to Salah al-Din," 74, line 25.
56. Sultan Valad, *Ebtidā Nāmeh,* 80, 90, 94–95, 123. See also Sepahsalar, *Resāleh Sepahsalar*, 115–16. Salah al-Din advised Sultan Valad to pledge to him as his master: see *Ebtidā Nāmeh,* 105, 110–11.
57. Sultan Valad, *Ebtidā Nāmeh,* 115–16, 118.
58. Sultan Valad, *Ebtidā Nāmeh,* 119.
59. Sultan Valad, *Ebtidā Nāmeh,* 126.
60. Izad Goshasb, 64.
61. See Zarrinkoob, *Pel-e Pel-e tā Molāqāt-e Khodā*, 129. (Rumi had three sons and one daughter, Malekeh Khātoon; the third son was named Muzzafir al-Din Amir: Izad Goshsb, 65.)
62. *Maqālāt*, 141, 143–44.
63. *Maqālāt*, 161.
64. Sultan Valad, *Ebtidā Nāmeh,* 68.
65. See the introduction by Partow 'Alavi (written in the year 1335/1956) to *Kulliyāt Divan-i Shams Tabrizi* (Tehran: Entesharat Safi Ali Shah,

12th ed., 1377/1998), 122, quoting Rumi's *Fīhi mā fīh* . See also Lewis, *Rumi*, 173.

66. See Jalal al-Din Humai's introduction (dated 1335/1956) to *Kulliyāt Divan-i Shams Tabrizi* (Tehran: Entesharat Safi Ali Shah, 12th ed., 1377/1998), 62 (see also note 1, 55).
67. Sepahsalar refers to it as Husām al-Din's spiritual paradigm: see *Resāleh Sepahsalar*, 119, 120–21.
68. See James Roy King, "Narrative Disjunction and Junction in Rumi's 'Mathnawi'," *The Journal of Narrative Technique* 19, no. 3 (Fall 1989), 276–77.
69. See Nile Green, *Sufism: A Global History* (West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 80.
70. S. H. Nasr, "Rumi and the Sufi Tradition," in *The Scholar and the Saint: Studies in Commemoration of Abu'l-Rayham al-Bīrūnī and Jalal al-Din Rūmī*, ed. Peter J. Chelkowski (New York: NY University Press, 1975), 174, 175–76.
71. Alessandro Bausani, "Il Pensiero Religioso di Maulānā Gialāl ad-Din Rūmī," *Oriente Moderno* 33, no. 4 (April 1953), 180–98. See also A. Bausani, "Theism and Pantheism in Rumi," *Iranian Studies* 1, no. 1 (Winter 1968), 8–24.
72. The Koranic verses in the *Masnavi* are those important to Burhan al-Din, mentioned in his *Ma'āref*: see Lewis, *Rumi*, 103, 105. (Perhaps this was a way of reviving the older tone of spirituality in Konya for the disciples.)
73. F. Mojtabai, "Dāstān-hāye Hindī dar Adabīyāt-i Fārsī," in *Yekī Qatreh Bārān*, ed. Ahmad Taffazoli (Tehran, 1370/1991), 476–77, 482.
74. Gholam Hosein Yousofi, "Mawlavī as Storyteller," in *The Scholar and the Saint: Studies in Commemoration of Abu'l-Rayham al-Bīrūnī and Jalal al-Din Rūmī*, ed. Peter J. Chelkowski (New York: NY University Press, 1975), 299. See also D: 2943; M: IV: 739, 800.
75. M: III: 593–94; M: IV: 650. D: 41, 424, 429, 483, 920, 2203, 2649, 2661. In one *ghazal* (D: 441), Rumi calls Diogenes "Sheikh" for his intuitive wisdom in searching for a true human soul by carrying a torch in hand during the day, symbolically bringing the torch close to people's faces to identify whether they are honest or not! Galen is mentioned numerous times in both the *Masnavi* and the *Divan* (D: 321, 424, 429, 591, 1422, 1439, 1963).
76. D: 11, 1221; M: III: 414. Rumi also refers to al-Ghazzālī's book of *Kīmīya-ye Sa'ādat* (D: 973).
77. M: I: 192–93; M: VI: 1196–97, 1206–15, 1225–28, 1235–36, 1237–45.
78. See D: 2039, a *ghazal* in which Abul 'ala (Ma'arri), the blind, eccentric, strictly vegetarian, and anti-religious poet of the twelfth century, is also mentioned.
79. Quoted by Lewis in *Rumi: Past and Present*, 537.
80. M: I: 34–35.
81. M: I: 44–45; II: 269.

82. M: I: 75.
83. M: I: 77.
84. M: I: 87.
85. M: I: 95–112.
86. M: I: 147–49; II: 249.
87. M: I: 142.
88. M: I: 164.
89. M: I: 137; see also II: 258.
90. M: II: 269–70.
91. M: II: 273; M: V: 1012–13.
92. Rumi favored not mere toleration, but full acceptance of all communities for the sake of peace and harmony: see Cyrus Masroori, "An Islamic Language of Toleration: Rumi's Criticism of Religious Persecution," *Political Research Quarterly* 63, no. 2 (June 2010), 243–56.
93. M: II: 303–6.
94. M: II: 326–28. See also III: 488.
95. See *Divan*: 90, 107, 114, 124, 176, 189, 204, 970, 1305, 1377, 1534, 1869, 1959, 3010.
96. Apart from the numerous references in the *Divan* about roaming around the Arabian desert in hardship looking for God, the *Masnavi* also points out: "Those who rush to the *Ka'ba* with no reasonable justification will become despairing like those who came back." M: III: 433.
97. Humāi, *Kulliyāt Divan-i Shams Tabrizi*, 39, 46.
98. The imagery in the *Masnavi* is completely different from that in the *Divan*, which contains more diverse imagery and allegories, rather than just anecdotes, also indicating that Rumi was listening to music and/or dancing during the years when he composed the *Divan*. Unlike the *Masnavi*, the *Divan* becomes more of a personal experience. See Fatemeh Keshavarz, *Reading Mystical Lyric: The Case of Jalāl al-Dīn Rumi* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1988, 2000), 2, 73, 93, 146, 165n14, 175n1.
99. Izad Goshasb, *Jazabiyyāt-e Ilāhiyya* (with introduction by Bāstānī Pārīzī and the work completed by Abdol Bāqī Izad Goshasb), ix–x.
100. *Maqālāt*, 221.
101. Many Sufi orders used a hierarchical order for the transmission of knowledge.
102. See Aflaki, *Menāqib al-'Ārefīn*, 220; see also Mojaddedi, *Beyond Dogma*, 92, 105, quoting Rumi's *Fīhi mā fīh*, "Consult your heart even if the *muftis* have given you a *fatwa*."
103. For the reason why Islamic legalism became obsolete for many antinomian Sufis, see Mehdi Aminrazavi, "Antinomian Tradition in Islamic Mysticism," *The Bulletin of the Henry Martyn Institute of Islamic Studies* 4, nos. 1–2 (Jan.–June 1995), 21–22.
104. The title means: "It Is What It Is"
105. Izad Goshasb, xxxiii, xxxvii.

106. Jalal al-Din Rumi, *Fīhi mā fīhi*, ed. and annotated by B. Forouzānfar (Tehran: Entesharat Amir Kabir, 1362/1983), 98–99.
107. *Fīhi mā fīh*, 112.
108. *Fīhi mā fīh*, 97.
109. *Fīhi mā fīh*, 31.
110. *Fīhi mā fīh*, 76.
111. See D: 1462.
112. *Fīhi mā fīh*, 139.
113. *Fīhi mā fīh*, 9.
114. On the subject of cause and effect, see M: III: 556, 570.
115. M: II: 253–54, 269.
116. About the occasion when Rumi returned from Damascus after a fruitless search for Shams (after his final disappearance from Konya), Sultan Valad writes: "He said, 'I am indeed him, what are you looking for?'" See *Ebtidā Nāmeh*, 71–72.
117. *Fīhi mā fīh*, 88–89; see also D: 2185, where Rumi says, "Those who claim to have seen him, I ask them which way is towards Heavens (*rāh-e Āsemān*)?"

CHAPTER 5A

1. Shams and Rumi's enterprise was the summation of a spiritual search that has similarly appeared in different spiritual traditions. The experience of *nirvana* is to overturn *samsara*, or continuous birth and death, and exit the cycle of impermanent existence. This is another example of the elevation of the consciousness to a level that would bring the mind of the practitioner, like the Buddha, into a realm of "non-existence," ultimate existence, or *nirvana*.
2. See Husayn Ilahi-Ghumshei, "The Principles of the Religion of Love in Classical Persian Poetry," translated by Leonard Lewisohn, in *Hafiz and the Religion of Love in Classical Persian Poetry*, ed. Leonard Lewisohn (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2010), 77–78, 81–83; in the case of Hāfiz's use of Love for God, see also Ali-Asghar Seyed-Gohrab, "The Erotic Spirit: Love, Man and Satan in Hāfiz's Poetry," in *Hafiz and the Religion of Love in Classical Persian Poetry*, 110–11.
3. Rumi belonged to the Hanafī school of theology, while Shams belonged to the Shāfei.
4. Sultan Valad, *Ebtidā Nāmeh*, 72. There is, however, a *ghazal* that Rumi had composed for Shams after his first departure from Konya, which he sent along with a letter with Sultan Valad in order to bring Shams back to Rumi again (D: 1760).
5. Shams' aged body had veiled his true essence (D: 921).
6. "Moon-faced" is sometimes used to describe the beauty of the Buddha.
7. D: 668, 709, 728, 737, 802, 807, 845, 861, 914, 936, 948, 968, 1076, 1337, 1341, 1354, 1356, 1457, 1628, 1710, 1812 (the whole *ghazal* about Shams), 1991, 2029, 2230.

8. See D: 649, 697, 742, 747, 758, 792, 828, 982, 1114, 1147, 1161, 1232, 1338, 1375, 1600, 1615, 1690, 1765, 1766.
9. See D: 77, 132, 160, 530, 531, 535, 542, 544, 545, 565, 567, 568, 578, 586, 587, 600, 621, 624, 634, 642, 644, 645, 1237, etc.
10. See also D: 156, 157, 239, 370, 403, 533, 576, 577, 587, 594, 596, 601, 735, 739, 795, 814, 823, 835, 852, 977, 986, 1106, 1210, 1322, 1335, 1377, 1551, 1685, 1786, 1805, 1818, 1839, 1941, 1996, 2084, 2226, 2817, 2863, 2898, 2905, 2924–25, 2952, 3097, 3150; and M: II, 329; M: III: 507, 530.
11. Sultan Valad, *Ebtidā Nāmeh*, 34, 36–37.
12. Maitri Upanishad, *The Upanishads*, translated from the Sanskrit with an introduction by Juan Mascaro (Delhi: Penguin Books, 1965, reprinted 1994), 102. See also Mundaka Upanishad, 80, 83.
13. Swami Prabhavananda, *The Spiritual Heritage of India* (Chennai: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 2003), 45.
14. Occurrences of the non-articulating and non-revealing practice of *khāmoush,* in addition to what is cited and discussed in this chapter, can be found in *Divan's ghazals*: 102, 122, 124, 169, 200, 201, 213, 215–16, 221, 227, 238, 254, 297, 305, 312, 325, 332, 342, 343, 348, 351–52, 359, 364, 369, 371, 373, 404, 411, 455, 465, 482, 493, 541, 638, 644, 645, 658, 671, 674, 678, 684–86, 692, 694, 696, 697, 699, 706–7, 715, 718, 741, 744, 745 (the whole *ghazal* is about *khāmoush*), 758, 765–67, 780–81, 785–86, 791, 800, 836–37, 839, 855, 858, 864–65, 869–70, 873–74, 878–79, 892, 909–10, 912–14, 920, 923, 927, 932–33, 935, 947, 951, 954, 961, 965–66, 970 (truth is in silence), 984, 993, 996, 1006, 1013, 1037, 1039, 1049, 1056–58, 1082, 1087, 1098, 1122, 1133–34, 1136, 1138, 1146, 1167, 1173, 1183, 1186–88, 1201–2, 1205, 1217, 1227, 1236, 1238 (the sea is silent, the tides are in movement), 1239, 1241, 1264, 1268 (in silence lose your false existence), 1274, 1276, 1280, 1288, 1291, 1299, 1304–5, 1314, 1315 (the whole *ghazal* is about silence), 1316, 1318, 1330, 1336, 1342, 1345, 1348, 1370–72, 1381–82, 1384, 1393, 1396, 1405, 1407, 1421–22, 1426, 1431–33, 1436, 1439–40, 1445–46, 1472, 1476–78, 1489–90, 1497, 1502–3, 1513, 1515–16, 1520, 1528, 1531, 1533, 1535, 1537, 1539, 1556, 1562, 1564–65, 1574, 1581–82, 1585, 1588, 1604–5, 1614 (the whole *ghazal*), 1621, 1624, 1631, 1634, 1642, 1645, 1649, 1665, 1670, 1674, 1692, 1697, 1706, 1712–13, 1715, 1723–24, 1727, 1729–30, 1735, 1740, 1743, 1746, 1748, 1757, 1759, 1762, 1794–95, 1799, 1808 (the whole *ghazal*), 1813, 1827, 1833–34, 1837, 1845–46, 1857, 1859, 1863, 1868, 1875, 1887, 1889, 1897 (the whole *ghazal*), 1901, 1905, 1911, 1914–15, 1925, 1934, 1946, 1961, 1988, 1998, 2983, 2987, 2992, 2997, 2999, 3011, 3025, 3032, 3047–48, 3050, 3052, 3056, 3059, 3062, 3065, 3068, 3073, 3077–78, 3083, 3089, 3092, 3094, 3103, 3108, 3111, 3116, 3122, 3127–28, 3132–34, 3136–37, 3142, 3160–61, 3167, 3169, 3172, 3200. The metaphor also

occurs in the *Masnavi*: M: IV: 794. This is to note the importance of the realm of silence in liberation to Rumi and like-minded sages.

15. See Toshihiko Izutsu, *Sufism and Taoism: The Key Philosophical Concepts* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984), 48–65.
16. The fundamentalist schools of theology, the less flexible Hanbali in particular, is categorically against the idea of God having any similarity whatsoever to the created world.
17. See Jean Clam, "Das 'Paradoxon des Monotheismus' und die Metaphysik des Ibn 'Arabī," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 142 (1992), 275–86. This article disputes H. Corbin's questioning of Ibn 'Arabi's metaphysics and monotheism in relation to monism.
18. See Izutsu, *Sufism and Taoism*, 110–14.
19. Sultan Valad, *Ebtidā Nāmeh*, 76 (verse 23), 240 (8), 298 (7).
20. Resorting to no god, yet pursuing complete liberation from delusion and misconstruction of self and the world, was presented by the rationalist thinkers who followed spiritual paths in India. These included Gośala (the systematizer of a materialist school of Ajivikas around and shortly before the time of the Buddha in the sixth century BCE), Mahavira (the most important avatar of Jainism around the time of the Buddha), the Buddha, and various Chinese adepts such as Lao Tzu. They categorically rejected the idea of a god playing any role in human salvation. The non-dualist Vedantic and Upanishadic yogis presented their Brahman as the only reality that exists not only to counter those who believe the world is real, but also to counter the superstitious Vedic idea of sacrifice and ritual for gods. Successful attempts were made to bring Upanishads under the Vedic, theistic umbrella. But these failed to divinize the Buddha as a Vedic avatar. Even though Buddhist culture did not find a comfortable place in Indian society, the Buddha from the fourth century CE onward was regarded as the ninth reincarnation of Viśnu (the eighth being Krishna), the lord of preservation. In one of the many exegetical texts, the *Purana*, the Buddha is described as having attracted those who were running away from the Brahmanical caste system (see *Shree Madh Bhagvad Maha Purana*, part 1, chapter 3, stanza 24). (Thanks to Mr. Bhola Hari Dhital for his assistance with Sanskrit translation.)
21. The majority, Trinitarian Christian view is that Jesus is one *with* God, rather than being *a* separate god—both fully human and fully divine, one of the three persons in the Trinity. In *Jesus Through the Centuries* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985, reprinted NY: Harper and Row, 1987), Jaroslav Pelikan briefly discusses how the Council of Nicea, in 325 CE, addressed "the fundamental question creating discord . . . the relation between Godhead and Jesus as the Son of God" (52) and the Emperor Constantine's influence on the formulation that became the law of the church (52–53; see also 86). For a detailed discussion of the doctrine of the Trinity, see "Holy Trinity," *New Catholic Encyclopedia*,

2nd ed. (Detroit: Gale, 2003), vol. 14, 189–201. (I am thankful to Susan Lorand for this information.)

22. Alessandro Bausani, "Theism and Pantheism in Rumi," *Iranian Studies* 1, no. 1 (Winter 1968), 8–24. Bausani argues against his compatriot Martino Moreno's 1946 article, comparing Indian mysticism (pantheism) and Islamic Sufism. See Martino M. Moreno, "Mistica musulmana e mistica indiana," *Annali Lateranensi* 10 (1946), 103–212.
23. Bausani, "Theism and Pantheism in Rumi," 20.
24. D: 24, 132, 133, 581, 583, 731, 758, 824, 879, 951, 1094, 1214, 1459, 1507, 1545, 1833, 1834, 1854, 2012, etc.; see also M: II: 326–28.
25. See Sultan Valad, *Ebtidā Nāmeh*, 29 (verse 30), 61 (11), 69 (21), 70 (13), 85 (32–33), 110 (2), 121 (23), 157 (25–26), 233 (24–27), 235 (18–19), 320 (8).
26. From the surviving pictorial representations, the Mevlevi (as well as Bektāshi) dervishes looked quite like the Manichaean monks who wore white with cylindrical hats—and the followers of Bektāshi and Shems Tebrizi orders shaved all facial hair (Bektāshi-initiated dervishes would also wear earrings on their right earlobes: see Hamid Algar, "BEKTĀŠĪYA," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, December 15, 1989, accessed June 20, 2014), not to mention practiced celibacy and hierarchical ranking among the dervishes, again similar to Manichaean practices).
27. Yaprak Melike Uyar and Ş. Şehvar Beşiroğlu, "Recent Representations of the Music of the Mevlevi Order of Sufism," *Journal of Interdisciplinary Music Studies* 6, no. 2 (Fall 2012), art. # 12060202, 141.
28. The seven-hundred-year-old Mevlevi Sufi order has officially gone extinct, other than the theatrical performance of an annual festival of dance in Konya every December 17 at the commemoration of Rumi's demise. See Uyar and Beşiroğlu, "Recent Representations of the Music of the Mevlevi Order of Sufism," 144–45; Annemarie Schimmel, "Feiern zum Gedenken an Maulānā ğalāluddīn Balhī-Rūmī," *Die Welt des Islam* 16, nos. 1–4 (1975), 229–31.
29. See Fatemeh Keshavarz, *Reading Mystical Lyrics: The Case of Jalāl al-Dīn Rumi*, 164n5, quoting the sixteenth-century Dawlat Shah.
30. See D: 132, 150, 172, 182, 438, 483, 724, 987, 1122, 1185, 1305, 1330, 1370, 1372, 1849, 1859, 1931, 1933, 1955, and other scattered references to the inability of the intellect to experience Love.

CHAPTER 5B

1. See Marilyn R. Waldman, "The Development of the Concept of *kufr* in the Qur'ān," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 88, no. 3 (Jul.–Sep. 1968), 442–55.
2. Shams al-Din Ahmed al-Aflaki al-'Arefi, *Menāqib al-'Ārefīn*, ed. Tahsin Yazici (Tehran: Donya-ye Ketab, 1362/1983), 312.

3. Among the many poems touching on belief and disbelief, see D: 593, 1855, 1953, 2977, 3166.
4. See also *Maqālāt*, 192.
5. This is similar to Juliet's speech about what separates her from Romeo:

> What's in a name? that which we call a rose
> By any other name would smell as sweet (Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, act 2, scene 2).
> (I am grateful to Susan Lorand for pointing out this parallel.)

6. *Maqālāt*, 69.
7. For the translation of this *rubā'ī*, see M. Vaziri, *Beyond Sufism and Saint-hood: A Selection of Rumi's Poetry* (Innsbruck: Dream and Reality Publications, 1998), 48.
8. See also M: II: 271–23; III: 556, 570.
9. The limitations of human intellect and perception to comprehend deeper and experiential questions about existence were first proposed in the Western world Emmanuel Kant (d. 1804).
10. Similar advice is given by Lao Tzu: see *Tao Te Ching*, trans. Ch'u Ta-Kao (New York: Samuel Weiser, 1973), chapter 64, 79.
11. See also Aflaki al-'Arefi, *Menāqib al-'Ārefīn*, 212.
12. In the same part of the *Masnavi*, Rumi points out the division of living beings into three large categories: the realm of enlightened ones, angels, and those with pure consciousness; the animal lacking any knowledge, which indulges in consuming; and humankind, who is half animal and half angel (M: IV: 706). On the donkey-like people, see M: VI: 1200.
13. The examples of the warriors of *ghaza*, or warriors for the sake of Islam are: sultan Mahmoud of Ghazni (d. 1030), Ottoman Murad II (d. 1451), and Zahir al-Din Mohammad Babur (d. 1530), among others invented who the image of 'king-prophet-like' conquerors. See the study of Ali Anooshahr, *The Ghazi Sultans and the Frontiers of Islam: A comparative study of the late medieval and early modern periods*. London and New York: Routledge, 2009.
14. See also *Maqālāt*, 204, 309.
15. See *Maqālāt*, 737; see also M: I: 216.
16. For this translation of *rubā'ī*, see M. Vaziri, *The Guru of Rumi: The Teachings of Shams Tabrizi* (Varanasi: Pilgrims Publishing, 2008), 66. The same optical fallacy of the observer in a boat and a "moving shore" was presented by the famous Japanese Zen master, Dōgen Zenji (d. 1253), in his *Shōbōgenzō*. He lived at almost the same time as Rumi.
17. See also M: VI: 1177–79, 1182–84.
18. This story, like many others, seems to have been passed on to Rumi by Shams. See *Maqālāt*, 237.
19. *Maqālāt*, 287 (quoting the Prophet). Shams also rejects the ability of women to be spiritual masters, including Mohammad's daughter Fatima

and his wife 'Aisha; see 755–56. In a story in the *Masnavi*, Rumi alludes to women's weeping as a trap (M: I: 138–39).

20. See D: 483; see also *Maqālāt*, 183.
21. Rumi, like Shams, rebukes philosophers for their lack of direct experience with the inner core of existence, a reason for which the intellectual philosophers often do not relate non-intellectual experiences; see M: I: 183.

CHAPTER 6A

1. Of course, among others, Abul Abbas Iranshahrī, Marvazī, Gardīzī, and Dārā Shokuh studied and praised Indian religious traditions (the first three authors wrote on Buddhism). See also Yohanan Friedmann, "Medieval Muslim Views of Indian Religions," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 95/2 (April–June 1975), 214–21. The seventeenth-century Safavid philosopher Mīr Findiriskī (d. 1640) also made some attempts to compare Vedic philosophy and Vedanta with Sufism in Isfahan, but received no attention.
2. See Bruce B. Lawrence, "The Use of Hindu Religious Texts in al-Bīrūnī's India with Special Reference to Patanjali's Yoga-sutra," in *The Scholar and the Saint: Studies in Commemoration of Abu'l-Rayham al-Bīrūnī and Jalal al-Din Rūmī*, ed. Peter J. Chelkowski (New York: NY University Press, 1975), 29–48.
3. Mojtabai, *Hindu-Muslim Cultural Relations* (Tehran: Iranian Institute of Philosophy, 2008), 52, 53, 56–58.
4. Mojtabai, *Hindu-Muslim Cultural Relations*, 58.
5. Mojtabai, *Hindu-Muslim Cultural Relations*, 47, quoting *Rasa'il al-Biruni.*
6. Bernd Ratke, "Theologen und Mystiker in Hurāsān und Transoxanien," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 136 (1986): 540, 542. Several other ascetics of Balkh are mentioned in *Faḍā'il-i Balkh* as disciples of either Shaqīq or his contemporaries who had eccentric ideas. For an interesting account of Shaqīq, see Jürgen Paul, "Islamizing Sufis in Pre-Mongol Central Asia," *Islamisation de l'Asie centrale: Processus locaux d'acculturation du VII*^{e} *au XI*^{e} *siècle*, ed. Étienne de la Vaissière (Paris: *Studia Iranica*, Cahier 39, 2008), 310–14.
7. Ratke, "Theologen und Mystiker in Hurāsān und Transoxanien," 542, 549.
8. See Annemarie Schimmel, "The Martyr-Mystic Hallāj in Sindhi Folk-Poetry: Notes on a Mystical Symbol," *Numen* 9, no. 3 (Nov. 1962), 162.
9. Joel P. Brereton, "'Tat Tvam Asi' in Context," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 136 (1986), 99–109.
10. R. C. Zaehner, *Hindu and Muslim Mysticism* (London: University of London, The Athlone
    Press, 1960), 8; Martino M. Moreno, "Mistica musulmana e mistica indiana," *Annali Lateranensi* 10 (1946), 154; W. H. Siddiqi, "India's

Contribution to Arab Civilization," in *India's Contribution to World Thought and Culture,* ed. Lokesh Chandra, et al. (Madras: Vivekananda Rock Memorial Committee, 1970), 587; see also Majid Fakhry, *A History of Islamic Philosophy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 250. As 'Attār puts it, "Whatever exists is He, and whatever is He art thou. Thou art He, and He is thou, there is no duality."

11. Nicholson, "A Historical Enquiry Concerning the Origin," 330.
12. See Zaehner, *Hindu and Muslim Mysticism,* 109.
13. Abul Hassan Hujwīrī, *The Kashf al-Mahjub, The Oldest Persian Treatise on Sufism*, trans. and ed. Reynold A. Nicholson (Lahore Edition: Zaki Enterprises, 2002), 106.
14. Zaehner, *Hindu and Muslim Mysticism*, 99–100, 109, 111–13.
15. Zaehner, *Hindu and Muslim Mysticism*, 107–8, 109, 116–34.
16. Zaehner, *Hindu and Muslim Mysticism*, 98–99, 113, quoting Brahdarayanka Upanishad.
17. Moreno, "Mistica musulmana e mistica indiana," 153.
18. Reynold A. Nicholson, "A Historical Enquiry Concerning the Origin and Development of Sufiism, With a List of Definitions of the Terms 'Sūfi' and 'Tasawwuf,' Arranged Chronologically," *JRAS* (Apr. 1906), 326.
19. See Jawid A. Mojaddedi, "Getting Drunk with Abū Yazīd or Staying Sober with Junayd: The Creation of Popular Typology of Sufism," *BSAOS* 66, no. 1 (2003), 1–13.
20. 'Attār, *Tadhkarat ul-Aulīyā*, 163–209.
21. Zaehner, *Hindu and Muslim Mysticism*, 101–2.
22. Christopher Melchert, "The Transition from Asceticism to Mysticism at the Middle of the Ninth Century C.E.," *Studia Islamica* 83 (1996), 66–67.
23. All quotations of Kharaqānī are from 'Attār, *Tadhkarat ul-Aulīyā*, 667–715. Rumi composed some poems about Kharaqani's birth and qualities: see M: IV: 72–73, 726.
24. Rizi, *A History of Sufism in India*, vol. 1, 57.
25. 'Attār, *Tadhkarat ul-Aulīyā*, 583–89.
26. Schimmel, "The Martyr-Mystic Hallāj in Sindhi Folk-Poetry," 162, 200. See another work on Hallāj by A. Schimmel, *Al-Halladsch-"O Leute, rettet mich vor Gott": Texte islamischer Mystik* (Freiburg: Verlag Herder, 1995).
27. See Schimmel, "The Martyr-Mystic Hallāj," 162; see also Rizi, *A History of Sufism in India*, 33.
28. Zarrinkoob, *Justeju dar Tassawwuf Iran*, 137, 139–40, 147, 148.
29. *The Fihrist of al-Nadīm*, vol. 1, trans. and ed. Bayard Dodge (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), 474–76.
30. Karamustafa, *Sufism*, 25–26.
31. Schimmel, "The Martyr-Mystic Hallāj in Sindhi Folk-Poetry," 177–78; B. M. Pande, "Indian Religions and the West: Historical Perspective," in

India's Contribution to World Thought and Culture, ed. Lokesh Chandra, et al. (Madras: Vivekananda Rock Memorial Committee, 1970), 620.

32. Annemarie Schimmel. *Mystische Dimensionen des Islam: Die Geschichte des Sufismus*. 2. Auflage (München: Eugen Diederichs, 1992), 112, 192; see also A. Schimmel, *Al-HalladschMärtyrer der Gottesliebe* (Köln: Jakob Hegner, 1968), 81.
33. Schimmel, "The Martyr-Mystic Hallāj," 163–64, quoting H. Ritter.
34. Schimmel, "The Martyr-Mystic Hallāj," 172.
35. Schimmel, "The Martyr-Mystic Hallāj," 165, 173–74. Certain branches of the Qadiri Sufi order, because of their contact with Indian philosophy, had maintained monistic/Vedantic ideas; Dārā Shokuh became a supporter of Vedanta within the order since his guru was from the Qadiri order: 168–69.
36. Mojtabai, *Hindu-Muslim Cultural Relations*, 139–40.
37. Mojtabai, *Hindu-Muslim Cultural Relations*, 141.
38. Daryush Shayegan, *Hindouisme et Soufisme: Une lecture du Confluent des Deux Océan le Majma 'al-Bahrayn de Dârâ Shokûh* (Paris: Édition Albin Michel, S.A., 1997; 1968 PhD dissertation; first published 1979), 23; see also Mojtabai, *Hindu-Muslim Cultural Relations*, 66–67.
39. Shayegan, *Hindouisme et Soufisme*. Dārā Shokuh expounded on many concepts in trying to find a common ground between the two systems. For example, entering *Rizvan-e Akbar* or *Firdos 'ala* (Supreme Paradise) is the same as *Mukti*; *'Arash* (Supreme Sphere) is the same as *Akash* (Space); light of the heart is the same as the light of Upanishadic *atman*; the four worlds of *Lahut*, *Jabarut*, *Malakut*, and *Mithal* are the same as the four stages of the Upanishadic Vedanta, *Wake*, *Sleep*, *Deep Sleep*, and *Turiya* or the deepest Samadhi; *Love* (*nemud-e bī bud*), the power of obscuration, is the same as pre-eternal *maya* (the cosmic illusion of being while not being); the end of the world is the same as the end of *samsara* (endless births and deaths); *fanā* is the same as *moksha*; *liberation* and immersion in Love is the same as final *mukti*: 27–49, 56–60, 61–69, 113–19, 121–33, 134–42, 164–66, 231, 238.
40. See David Loy, "Enlightenment in Buddhism and Advaita Vedanta: Are Nirvana and Moksha the Same?" PhD diss., National University of Singapore.
41. There is a brief earlier attempt to connect Rumi with Vedanta, but only from the religious-scholastic point of view, by R. M. Chopra, "Rumi's Tasawwuf and Vedantic Mysticism," *Indo-Iranica* 61, nos. 1–2 (2008), 28–38.
42. There are four Vedas: *Rigveda, Yajurveda, Samaveda*, and *Atharvaveda*.
43. It is also worth mentioning Samkhya, one of the six major Indian philosophical schools of India—a dualist school dating from the pre-Buddhic

times that developed outside of the Vedic tradition (a school that Abu Rayhan Biruni's *India* treated in the eleventh century).

44. Govinda Gopal Mukhopadhyaya, *Studies in the Upaniṣads* (Delhi: Pilgrims Book Pvt. Ltd., 1999), 26–27.
45. Hermann Oldenberg, *The Doctrine of the Upanishads and the Early Buddhism* (*Die Lehre der Upanischaden und die Anfäng des Buddhismus*), trans. Shridhar B. Shrotri (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1991, 1997), 57–58.
46. The Veda speaks of Brahma as the Creator, a male deity who passed on the assignment of protecting the Creation to Viśnu and his subsequent reincarnations. Some of the earliest Upanishads were recorded and taught after the earliest Vedas had appeared. The main theme of the Upanishads concerns a supreme entity, Brahman (a neutral/genderless Sanskrit word meaning "expansion"), whose eternal and immortal existence predates everything.
47. Swami Prabhavananda, *The Spiritual Heritage of India* (Chennai: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 2003), 284.
48. Mukhopadhyaya, *Studies in the Upaniṣads*, 47.
49. "Mundaka Upanishad," *The Upanishads*, trans. from the Sanskrit with an introduction by Juan Mascaró (Delhi: Penguin Books, 1965, reprinted 1994), 81; see also Prabhavananda, *The Spiritual Heritage*, 45.
50. "Mundaka Upanishad," *The Upanishads*, 81.
51. "Maitri Upanishad," *The Upanishads,* 34.
52. *The Upanishads*, p. 80; see also Prabhavananda, *The Spiritual Heritage*, 60.
53. "Maitri Upanishad," *The Upanishads*, 35.
54. Prabhavananda, *The Spiritual Heritage*, 63, 51.
55. Prabhavananda, *The Spiritual Heritage*, 45.
56. "Svetasvatara Upanishad," *The Upanishads,* 86.
57. "Mandukya Upanishad," *The Upanishads*, 83–84.
58. Prabhavananda, *The Spiritual Heritage*, 66, 71.
59. "Svetasvatara Upanishad," *The Upanishads*, 93.
60. "Katha Upanishad," *The Upanishads*, 59, 60, 66.
61. For all the quotations, see "Mundaka Upanishad," "Svetasvatara Upanishad," "Maitri Upanishad," "Chandogya Upanishad," *The Upanishads*, 78, 79, 80, 90, 92, 101, 103, 114.
62. Prabhavananda, *The Spiritual Heritage*, 276.
63. See D: 661, 686, 690, 698, 719, 733, 757, 816, 845, 862, 870, 876, 878, 979, 1038, 1053, 1061, 1190–20, 1123–24, 1144, 1195, 1204, 1279, 1344, 1477, 1485, 1489, 1520, 1554–55, 1621, 1667, 1854, 1894, 1940, 1947, 1952, 2995, 3037–38, 3139.
64. See Oldenberg, *The Doctrine of the Upanishads and the Early Buddhism*, 48–50.
65. "Mundaka Upanishad," *The Upanishads*, 81.

66. "This invisible and subtle essence is the Spirit of the whole universe. That is Reality. That is Truth. Thou are That" (*The Upanishads*, 118). See also Joel P. Brereton, "'Tat Tvam Asi' in Context," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 136 (1986), 99–109, and R. C. Zaehner, *Hindu and Muslim Mysticism* (London: University of London, The Athlone Press, 1960), 95.
67. Translation from M. Vaziri, *The Guru of Rumi: The Teachings of Shams Tabrizi* (Varanasi: Pilgrims Publishing, 2008), 53. It can be said that Rumi is neither an eternalist, interested in the next world, nor a nihilist, who believes only in this world. He is a transcendentalist, or, according to his poem, perhaps none of them.
68. It should be noted that the Iranian world has oftentimes dealt with the dualist doctrines, be it Zurvanism, a pre-Zoroastrian cult, Manichaeism, or Mazdakism. Thus, Rumi's non-dualism should be seen in light of challenging the former beliefs in dualism.
69. The first sermon was on the "Four Noble Truths."
70. Nāgārjuna was the prime architect of "non-self" and "emptiness" in Mahayana Buddhist philosophy: see David J. Kalupahana, *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā of Nāgārjuna: The Philosophy of the Middle Way* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 2006, first published by the State University of New York, 1986).
71. Muso Kokushi, *Dream Conversations: On Buddhism and Zen,* trans. Thomas Cleary, (Boston and London: Shambhala, 1994), 61.
72. Kokushi, *Dream Conversations: On Buddhism and Zen,* 78.
73. Kokushi, *Dream Conversations: On Buddhism and Zen,* 61–63.
74. See Vaziri, *Buddhism in Iran*, 36–37.
75. See, for example, D: 254, 262, 332, 351, 432, 434, 479, 602, 686, 689, 1080, 1569, 1913, 1952.
76. The name of the city *Bukhara*, derived from Bihār (Vihār) in Uighur and Khotanese, means "center of learning," as Rumi refers to it (M: III: 585; see also III: 588–89).
77. See Vaziri, *Buddhism in Iran*, 89–90, 99–101.
78. See M: I: 194; II: 262.
79. *Kharābāt* means the *forbidden place*—and could potentially refer to an "idol" Buddhist temple in this case.
80. The Buddha was a prince turned renunciate collecting alms.

CHAPTER 6B

1. Description by Mark S. G. Dyczkowski, personal correspondence between July and September 2014, via email. See also his penetrating study, *The Doctrine of Vibration: An Analysis of the Doctrines and Practices of Kashmir Shaivism* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 2000; first published Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987). The absolute and non-dualistic Śaiva of Kashmir differs from its dualist counterpart (of

Southern India), whose actual world is composed of *maya* and individual souls. See L. D. Barnett, "Kashmir Shaivism. Fasciculus I by J. C. Chitterji," book review in *JRAS* (Jan. 1915), 175–77.

2. Gerald James Larson, "The Sources for Śakti in Abhinavagupta's Kāsmīr Śaivism: A Linguistic and Aesthetic Category," *Philosophy East and West* 24, no. 1 (Jan. 1974): 41–56, 43.
3. Description by Mark Dyczkowski, personal correspondence.
4. Description by Mark Dyczkowski; see also *The Doctrine of Vibration*, 20–21, 46, 50–51.
5. See L. D. Barnett, "Kashmir Shaivism. Fasciculus I by J. C. Chitterji," book review in *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (Jan. 1915), 175–77.
6. Geoffrey Samuel, *The Origins of Yoga and Tantra: Indic Religions to the Thirteenth Century* (Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 253.
7. Larson, "The Sources for śakti," 53.
8. This author's personal notes from Kashmiri Shaivism seminars conducted by Dr. Bettina Bäumer at Deer Institute in Bir, India, and in Varanasi, India (summer 2013 and winter 2014).
9. Samuel, *The Origins of Yoga and Tantra,* 255, 291.
10. Singh, *Pratyabhijnāhrdayan*, 100–102 (*Sutra* 18).
11. Jaideva Singh, ed. and trans., *Pratyabhijnāhrdayan: The Secret of Self Recognition* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Pub., 1987), 114 (*Sutra* 20, the last *Sutra*).
12. Kashmiri Shaivism, because it includes dualism and non-dualism, is referred to as *para-advaita*. The Vedantic thinking was brought out of the work of Shankara (the great commentator of the Upanishads) by Kşemaraja (the great master of eleventh-century Kashmiri Shaivism) in order to end the repetition of *samsara*, or endless birth and death: see Singh, *Pratyabhijnāhrdayan,* pp. 45, 67–68. Dyczkowski mentions that Shankara's *advaita* Vedanta, because of its absolutism, radically differed from the non-dualism in the śaiva tradition: see Dyczkowski, *The Doctrine of Vibration*, 24–25, 34–40, 45.
13. Singh, *Pratyabhijnāhrdayan: The Secret of Self Recognition,* 100–101, 154.
14. Samuel, *The Origins of Yoga and Tantra,* 328, 332.
15. The Theravada point of view is that Buddha taught everything he knew, but the Mahayana Buddhists who practiced Tantra say that he did not. Roger R. Jackson, *Tantric Treasures: Three Collections of Mystical Verse from Buddhist India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 13–14.
16. Samuel, *The Origins of Yoga and Tantra*, 191. Tantra has also meant for the practitioners to attain magical power, whether using the low strategy of doing what has been forbidden (or considered impure) in their own society—such as tasting semen, touching blood, and sexual acts—or using a higher strategy involving mental and Kundalini yoga practices. In either case, Tantra's culture has been associated with secrecy.

17. Knut A. Jacobsen, "The Female Pole of the Godhead in Tantrism and the Praktri of Sāmkhya," *Numen* 43, fasc. 1 (Jan. 1996), 57. The written Tantric material in Sanskrit only began to emerge after 800 CE.
18. Samuel, *The Origins of Yoga and Tantra*, 276, 283. Kundalini is an unconscious energy that is blocked; it is represented as goddess or a "coiled" force at the base of the spine.
19. Samuel, *The Origins of Yoga and Tantra*, 325, 341.
20. See Aflaki al-'Arefi, *Menāqib al-'Ārefīn,* 297.
21. In Bhairava Tantra; see Samuel, *The Origins of Yoga and Tantra,* 254.
22. Jacobsen, "The Female Pole of the Godhead," 58, 60, 63, 72. The union of the two means the presence of the world of *matter* and *spirit* (*prakriti* and *purusa*) in the Sāmkhya school of philosophy—a school that Abu Rayhan al-Biruni expounded on in his work, *India*.
23. Samuel, *The Origins of Yoga and Tantra,* 265.
24. Samuel, *The Origins of Yoga and Tantra*, 293.
25. The Muslim conquest encountered many Tantric centers, especially in the Swat Valley (known as Uddiyana—home of Padma Sambhava, the pioneer Tantric Buddhist who arrived in Tibet in the eighth century). See Dyczkowski, *The Doctrine of Vibration*, 3; Samuel, *The Origins of Yoga and Tantra*, 199, 217, 295.
26. See Lawrence Sutin, *All is Change: The Two-Thousand Year Journey of Buddhism to the West* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2006), 33–34.
27. Samuel, *The Origins of Yoga and Tantra,* 255, 264–65, 271, 302, 306, 325–26; see also Jacobsen, "The Female Pole of the Godhead," 57–58.
28. There is one arguable reference (according to Aflaki, 449–50) that Rumi in one night, when he slept with his wife, Kerra Khatun, penetrated her about 70 times: see F. Lewis, *Rumi*, 320. The practice of penetration while holding the release of semen or withholding ejaculation is a Tantric practice. But it is difficult to relate Rumi's sexual practices, with any certainty, to a known Tantra practice, especially among the scattered mystics in the Islamic world withheld any such practices from being made public. Also, the short union between Shams and the young woman Kimiya in Konya, arranged by Rumi, may have been a signifier of the violation of conventions by the celibate Shams, who never settled for a family life.
29. For various applications of *kharābāt*, see D: 152, 334, 392, 477, 516, 683, 1152, 1165, 1168, 1332, 1415, 1445 (the whole *ghazal*), 1477, 1545, 1608, 1642, 1645, 1854, 1879.
30. This poem is believed to point to Najm al-Din Kubra having held a flag of the Mongols at the time when he was severely injured during the Mongol invasion of Urganj: see Izad Goshasb, xxviii.
31. For the wine metaphor, see further D: 119, 135, 179, 477, 492, 1160, 1173, 1371, 1375, 1403, 1407, 1440, 1733, 1763, 1814, 1827, 1828, 1838, 1879, 1912, 1987.

32. See Jawid Mojaddedi, *Beyond Dogma: Rumi's Teachings on Friendship with God and Early Sufi Theories* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 98, 101: "Rumi uses incredible skill to maintain ambiguity in his story about whether or not the Sufi master is actually drinking wine." See also Lewis, *Rumi*, 325.
33. Jackson, *Tantric Treasures*, 9–10.
34. The two types of *dohas* are known as "performance songs" or "diamond songs": Jackson, *Tantric Treasures*, 10, 34–35.
35. Jackson, *Tantric Treasures*, 16–17, 34.
36. Jackson, *Tantric Treasures*, 37–39.
37. Kabir was born to Muslim weaver caste parents and was under the mentorship of the famous guru of the time, Ramananda: Jackson, *Tantric Treasures*, p. 43. The poetry of Kabir was most likely influenced by Bhakti Yoga, whose later influence was also manifested in Tagore's poems collected in Gitanjali: see Fatullah Mojtabai, *Hindu-Muslim Cultural Relations* (Tehran: Iranian Institute of Philosophy, 2008), 184; see also Emile Dermenghem, "Yoga and Sufism: Ecstasy Techniques in Islam," in *Forms and Techniques of Altruistic and Spiritual Growth: A Symposium*, ed. Pitirim A. Sorokin (New York: Beacon Press, 1971), 109–16; Rizi, *A History of Sufism in India*, 375–80. Kabir was further influenced by certain Vedantic-Buddhist ideas such as being liberated from the "terrible ocean" of the recurrent birth and deaths, *samsara*: see Rizi, *A History of Sufism in India*, 380.
38. Jackson, *Tantric Treasures*, 43, 44.
39. John Blofeld, *The Tantric Mysticism of Tibet: A Practical Guide* (New York: Causeway Books, 1974; first published by George Allen and Unwin, 1970), 70–71. Vajrayana Buddhism has been criticized for being a decadent form of Bön tradition in Tibet, p. 35. (Bön is a pre-Buddhist school that is still practiced in today's Tibet and parts of Nepal).
40. See Aflaki al-'Arefi, *Menāqib al-'Ārefīn,* 297.
41. Blofeld, *The Tantric Mysticism of Tibet,* 70, 73.
42. Samuel, *The Origins of Yoga and Tantra,* 268.
43. If the secret is revealed, it can no longer be called a secret: D: 183.
44. Blofeld, *The Tantric Mysticism of Tibet*, 27, 40–41, 45, 80–81, 83–86, 87–89. In the Buddhism of today, the Lamas of Tibet also continue to practice the same type of visualization of a female deity and organize *tsog* (or *ganachakra*) for greater inspiration: see Lama Thubten Yeshe, *Becoming Vajrasattva: The Tantric Path of Purification*, foreword by Lama Zopa Rinpoche, ed. Nicholas Ribush (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2004), 27, 40–41, 45, 149.
45. Blofeld, *The Tantric Mysticism of Tibet,* 76–78.
46. Blofeld, *The Tantric Mysticism of Tibet,* 32–33, 72, 75, 83, 85.
47. Singh, *Pratyabhijnāhrdayan*, 70 (*Sutra* 8); in *Sutra* 16, 91–93; see also *Sutra* 19, 103–106.

48. Alexis Sanderson, "Purity and Power among the Brahmins of Kashmir," in *The Category of the Person*, ed. Michael Carrithers, Steven Collins, and Steven Lukes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 197–99.
49. Sanderson, "Purity and Power among the Brahmins of Kashmir," 201, 204.
50. For polishing one's mirror, see also D: 1099, 1359, 1516, 1816.
51. Bettina Bäumer, "Sūrya in Śaiva Perspective: The Sāmbapañcāśikā A Mystical Hymn of Kashmir and its Commentary by Kşemarāja," in *Sahŗdaya: Studies in Indian and South East Asian Art in Honor of Dr. R. Nagaswamy*, ed. Bettina Bäumer, R. N. Misra, Chirapat Pirapandvidya, and Devendra Handa (Chennai: Tamil Arts Academy, 2006), 1–28.
52. For the cult of Surya, and the Sun-God temple of medieval India, see Bettina Bäumer and M.A. Konishi, *Konārka: Chariot of Sun-God* (New Delhi: D. K. Printworld, 2007).
53. Bäumer, "Sūrya in Śaiva Perspective," 3.
54. Bäumer, "Sūrya in Śaiva Perspective," 7, 9.
55. Bäumer, "Sūrya in Śaiva Perspective," 14.
56. Bäumer, "Sūrya in Śaiva Perspective," 17.
57. Bäumer, "Sūrya in Śaiva Perspective," 10, 18–19.
58. *Maqalat*, 115.

CONCLUSION

1. For a similar anti-clerical position taken by Hāfiz almost a generation after Rumi, see Leonard Lewisohn, "The Religion of Love and the Puritans of Islam: Sufi Sources of Hāfiz's Anti-clericalism," in *Hafiz and the Religion of Love in Classical Persian Poetry,* 159–60, 174.
2. See Sultan Valad, *Ebtidā Nāmeh*, 74 (lines 25–27).
3. Rumian studies will be enhanced by the recent availability of two important sources in the Iranian literature: comprehensive editions of Shams' *Maqālāt* and Sultan Valad's poetry.

APPENDIX

1. Saiyid Athar Abbas Rizi, *A History of Sufism in India*, vol. 1 (Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, Pvt, Ltd., 1978), 336–38, 349, 353.
2. See Annemarie Schimmel, "The Martyr-Mystic Hallāj in Sindhi, Folk-Poetry: Notes on a Mystical Symbol," *Numen* 9, fasc. 3 (Nov. 1962), 168.
3. Rizi, *A History of Sufism in India*, 333, 354.
4. See M. Vaziri, *Buddhism in Iran*, 18.
5. Maurizio Taddei, "On the Śiva Image from Kūhah, Mesopotamia," *Annali dell'Istituto Universitario Orientale di Napoli* 31, no. 4 (1971), 548–52.

6. See Karamustafa, *God's Unruly Friends*, 37, 43, 57.
7. Karamustafa, *God's Unruly Friends*, 34, 36, 98–100.
8. Rizi, *A History of Sufism in India*, 83; see also Karamustafa, *God's Unruly Friends*, 87–88.
9. Shaman Hatley, "Mapping the Esoteric Body in the Islamic Yoga of Bengal," *History of Religions* 46, no. 4 (May 2007), 351–52, 363; see also Rizi, *A History of Sufism in India*, 353.
10. Padma Sambhava's birthplace is believed to be in the Swat Valley. Mark S. G. Dyczkowski, *The Doctrine of Vibration: An Analysis of the Doctrines and Practices of Kashmir Shaivism* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 2000; first published by State University of New York Press, 1987), 3; Samuel, *The Origins of Yoga and Tantra*, 199, 217, 295.
11. Samuel, *The Origins of Yoga and Tantra*, 180, 257, 335, 342.
12. Rizi, *A History of Sufism in India*, 342.
13. Rizi, *A History of Sufism in India*, 342. It was the Chishtis who made such claims; the first Sufi to perform *namāz ma'kus* was Baba Farid.
14. Rizi, *A History of Sufism in India*, 336–37.
15. Akhtar Qambar, "Some Differences Between Arab and Persian Schools of Sufism," *Islam and the Modern Age* 14, no. 4 (November 1983), 269; Zaehner, *Hindu and Muslim Mysticism*, 177.
16. Rizi, *A History of Sufism in India*, 71.
17. Nicholson, *The Mystics of Islam*, 90; Ignaz Goldziher, *Vorlesungen Über den Islam* (Heidelberg, 1910), 172. Rumi writes:

    > Not until the time when all madrasas and minarets are destroyed
    > Will the road of Qalandari deeds be paved.
    > Not until belief becomes disbelief, and disbelief, belief,
    > Will a single person of the truth become in reality a Muslim. (D: r, 611)

    Along the same line of thinking, many Sufi poets on the path to enlightenment reject the distinctions between faith and infidelity, between piety and heresy, and between the Ka'ba and the idol-temple, because to them, both have equal status and are one and the same. Rumi writes:

    > In search of the truth, the wise man and the fool are the same.
    > In the path of love, the self and the stranger are the same.
    > The one who was given the wine of overjoyed connection,
    > In his doctrine, *Ka'ba* and the idol-Buddhist-temple (*botkhaneh*) are the same. (D: r. 306)

18. Fritz Meier, *Abū Sa'īd-i Abū l-Hayr: Wirklichkeit und Legende*, vol. 6, *Acta Iranica* (Tehran and Liège, 1976), 78–79, 81.
19. Rizi, *A History of Sufism in India*, 72; for Abu Said being controversial, see Karamustafa, *Sufism*, 123, 144.
20. Meier, *Abū Sa'īd-i Abū l-Hayr*, 81, 84.

21. Meier, *Abū Sa'īd-i Abū l-Hayr,* 94–96. Most of the quotations above from Abu Sa'īd are from *Asrār al-Tawhid*.
22. Kharaqānī's attempt to domesticate two ferocious lions indicates his mental power exercised through his supreme (paranormal) energy. Today, statues of the two lions stand at the shrine of Kharaqānī's tomb in his native of Kharaqān.
23. See Rizi, *A History of Sufism in India*, 369.
24. Jamal J. Elias, "Sufism," *Iranian Studies* 31, nos. 3–4, A Review of the *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (Summer–Autumn 1998), 598.
25. For Rumi's attribution of lion-riding to Kharaqānī, see M: VI: 1123; see also Simon Digby, "To Ride a Tiger or a Wall? Strategies of Prestige in Indian Sufi Legend," *According to Tradition: Hagiographical Writing in India*, ed. Winand M. Callewaert and Rupert Snell (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1994), 109, quoting Abu Said from Ibn Munawwar's *Asrar al-Tawhid*; see also 122.
26. Digby, "To Ride a Tiger," 102n6, 108, 109.
27. See Digby, "To Ride a Tiger," 108.
28. See Thierry Zarcone, "The Lion of Ali in Anatolia: History, Symbolism and Iconology," in *The Art and Material Culture of Iranian Shi'ism: Iconography and Religious Devotion in Shi'i Islam*, ed. Pedran Khosronejad (London & New York: I.B. Tauris, 2012), 104–21.
29. See the portrait of Jilānī in Nile Green, *Sufism: A Global History* (West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 88.
30. Rizi, *A History of Sufism in India*, 337.
31. Rizi, *A History of Sufism in India*, 329–30.
32. Hatley, "Mapping the Esoteric Body," 352–53, 358.
33. Hatley, "Mapping the Esoteric Body," 367–68.
34. Hatley, "Mapping the Esoteric Body," 357–58, 361, 367.
35. See Jürgen Paul, "Influences indiennes sur la naqshbandiyya d'Asie centrale," *Cahiers d'Asie Centrale* 1–2 (1996), 203–17.
36. All points from Carl W. Ernst, "Situating Sufism and Yoga," *Journal of Royal Asiatic Society* 15, no. 1 (April 2005), 15–43.
37. Carl W. Ernst, "Islamization of Yoga in the 'Amrtakunda' Translations," *Journal of Royal Asiatic Society* 13, no. 2 (July 2003), 199–226. The book at some point was attributed to Ibn 'Arabi, of course erroneously, in order to give the text greater authority: 204.
38. Rizi, *A History of Sufism in India*, 335.
39. Ernst, "Islamization of Yoga," 207, see also 210–11.
40. Ernst, "Islamization of Yoga," 205.

Glossary of Persian, Arabic, and Sanskrit Terminologies

Persian and Arabic

ʿAql: The thinking faculty, intellect, rationality
Baqā: Undying, unchanging permanence
Bāqī: Permanent, subsisting
Bazm-e majlisiān: The feast for the assembled ones
Bī-khodī: Non-self
Bī-khwīshī: Non-self
Bī nām o neshān: Without name or sign
Bot: Derived from the word *buddh*, Buddha, it also means idol
Bot-parast: Idol-worshipper (may refer to a Buddhist)
Chār zarb: Refers to *four strikes* of shaving off the head, eyebrows, mustache, and beard
Dard: pain (of existence) or ache (of awakening)
Daʿwat: Proselytizing
Divan: Collection of lyrical poetry
Dowlat-e bīdār: Awakened domain
Ebtidā Nāmeh: A book of poetry composed by Sultan Valad, Rumi's son
Fanā: The absence of the egocentric and thinking self, the experience of non-self
Fānī: Impermanent, subject to decay
Fīhi mā fīh: (*"It is What It is"*)—book of Rumi's utterances
Ghazal: Lyrical poetry
Hadīth: Prophetic saying
Īmān: Belief, faith
ʿIshq: Love (the highest state of Reality in the Shamsian and Rumian sense)
Kāfir: Non-believer, or non-monotheist (casually it refers to non-Muslim)
Khalwat: Seclusion
Khāmoush: Silence, non-articulation
Kharābāt: Brothel, or wine tavern; a mystical metaphor
Kufr: Disbelief, heresy
Lā makān: Placeless
Majlis: Assembly of mystics

Maqālāt ("Discourses"): Discourses of Shams recorded while he was living in Konya 1244–47
Masnavi: Collection of *couplet* poetry (*Masnavi* or *Mathnawi* is derived from the Arabic for *two-lined* rhymed poetry)
Mazhab-e ʿIshq: Religion of Love
Miʿrāj: Ascension; Spiritual ascension to the highest stage; enlightenment (in Rumian sense); in its Islamic context it is referred to as the prophetic nocturnal journey on a winged horse to heaven
Molhid: Apostate
Motābeʿat: Following a religious or spiritual path
Mu'min: Believer, faithful
Muslim (musalmān): Surrendered (to the will of God); in Shams' interpretation, "state of submission and egoless"
Nafs: Mental disposition, ego, self
Namāz: Daily prayers
Qibla: The direction for prayer
Rab: The Lord
Resāleh: Treatise
Rubāʿī: Quatrain poetry
Samāʿ: Sacred dance, audition, whirling, with or without music
Sāqī: The cup-bearer, the symbolic immortal goddess
Shaman: A Central Asian (and Persian) word referring to an ascetic wanderer or Buddhist
Shams: Sun; also a masculine name
Sharāb: Wine
Sharīʿa: Islamic theological tenets
Tanzīh: God free from creation and imperfect mortals
Tashbīh: God similar to creation
Tawhīd: Monotheism, oneness
Wahdat ul-wujud: Oneness of Existence
Zindīq: Heretic

SANSKRIT

Advaita: Non-dual (derived from *dvait* [*duo*], *duality* or *two*, while the prefix "a" negates what follows it); non-two
Anatman: Non-self ("an" negates any self)
Atman: The Self
Brahma: "Expansion," the male Creator, God in the Vedic tradition
Brahman: The genderless and highest Reality which underlies all phenomena (the impersonal principle) of the Upanishads - the creator of all "gods"
Brahmin: A socio-religious caste in Hindu societies
Doha: A very old format of rhymed couplet poetry; the oldest Tantric *dohas* are in old Bengali, and later in other languages including in Hindi (Kabir)

Ganachakra: *gana* "group, or assembly," *chakra* "circle" = sitting in a circle, in a Tantric ceremony
Guru: Spiritual master or mentor
Maya: Illusion, illusive/fleeting phenomenon
Mokṣa: Liberation, enlightenment (predominantly used in a Brahmanical traditions)
Nirvana: Blowing out the flame, the extinction of all cravings, and negativities—enlightenment
Nirvanic state: An empty, formless and non-self state
Pandit: Interpreter of the *Vedas*
Prakriti: Matter (in Samkhya School of philosophy)
Puruṣa: Individual consciousness, spirit (in Samkhya School of philosophy)
Śakti (*śak* means "to be able" or "to have power"): the dynamic female energy and goddess
Samsara: Recurring cycle of birth and death
Shaivism or Śaivism: The cult of Śaiva (Shiva)—(*Shivaism* is perhaps a more accurate term than the adjective form *Shaivism*)
Tantra: Derived from the verb "tan" which means "to extend", "to spin" or "to weave;" suggests the tying together of a series of beliefs and rituals ('tantra' and 'texture', archi-*tecture*, *tech*-nology are philologically cognate; the verb *tañdan* in Persian [to weave] may possibly stem from the same etymology)
Upanishad: "to sit at the feet of" a master, the intellectual and "secret" teachings collected in more than 108 texts; 108 Upanishads
Vedanta: One of the six systems of Indian philosophy based on the Upanishads; the last (*anta*) part of the *Veda*, thus *Veda-anta* ('anta' and 'end' are philologically cognate)

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